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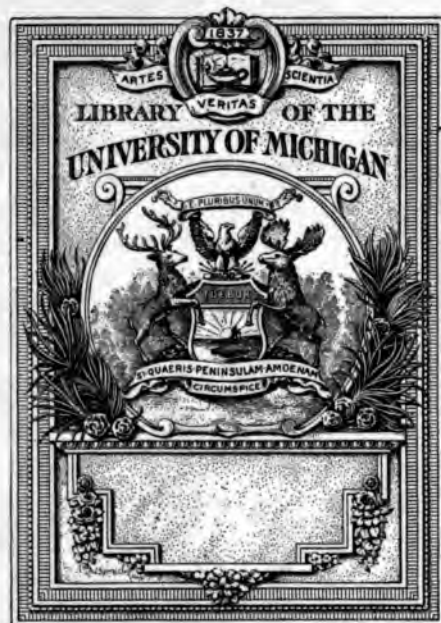
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LETTERS OF GEORGE BIRKBECK HILL

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George Birkbeck Hill.
Drawn by Ellen G. Hill, 1876

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LETTERS

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OF *Mary Ann Lincoln*
Painted by Ellen P. West, 1850

LETTERS
OF
GEORGE BIRKBECK HILL
D.C.L., LL.D.

HON. FELLOW OF PEMBROKE COLLEGE, OXFORD

ARRANGED BY HIS DAUGHTER
LUCY CRUMP

WITH PORTRAITS

LONDON
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PREFACE

“BLESSINGS on those who publish Letters and Biographies, but a tenfold blessing on the writers of Autobiographies. They surely shall escape Purgatory and have the choicest valley in Paradise all to themselves, where they shall find Boswells that have no end and no lack of interest.”

Birkbeck Hill wrote these words one day as he laid down Motley's Letters, but the blessing, in one form or another, was one which always rose to his lips after reading any faithful piece of biographical work. Of all reading he best loved that which admitted him to the intimacy of a fellow-man, where, a silent and unsuspected observer, he could study the growth of character and follow the development of thought through the pages of Letters or Autobiographies. It mattered little to him whether the writer of the letters, the subject of the biography, were a man of action or a man of thought so long as the portrayal of character were intimate and genuine. Of such reading he never tired.

He himself needs no detailed biography, for his life was all too uneventful to be closely recorded, nor did he, even to gain the choicest valley in Paradise, ever knowingly compose an Autobiography. Unconsciously, however, his letters, such as have been

preserved—and they are very many—do achieve almost such a result, perhaps all the more successfully because they are records of present moments rather than memories of past times.

From the time when he was a lad of thirteen he was a great letter-writer, and the habit was one which stayed by him to the end. From these letters a fairly consecutive narrative of fifty years can be constructed. Something they need here and there to explain or correct them, some brief introduction, also, to place them in their right setting, but they are in the main enough in themselves to show what manner of man was Birkbeck Hill, from what he grew, how developed, and what became. Certainly, this narrative which they relate is one which, lacking though it be in anything like stirring incident, yet possesses just that note of intimacy which Birkbeck Hill prized so highly. It may be that, in a busy and bustling world, there yet remain some quiet students of quiet lives who will say, as they turn over the following pages, "Blessings on those who publish Letters."

Sept. 1906.

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LETTERS OF GEORGE BIRKBECK HILL



CHAPTER I

Birth and parentage—English and Welsh ancestry—The family community at Bruce Castle—Schoolboy letters—Wordsworth—First meeting with Annie Scott—His future wife's girlhood—Oxford—Its effects on his character.

GEORGE BIRKBECK NORMAN HILL was the second son and third child of Arthur and Ellen Hill. He was born on the 7th of June 1835, at Bruce Castle, Tottenham. His godfather was George Birkbeck, the originator of many successful schemes for the welfare of the artisan classes; excellent, however, as these schemes were, they were not such as to attract his godson.

"I was christened a philanthropist," he often complained, "but," he would cheerfully add, "the old Adam was too strong, and I escaped the fate predestined for me."

The sound of the word "Birkbeck" was, moreover, a harsh one in his sensitive ears.

"It is a vile, ugly, philanthropic, mechanics-institute, peculiar-kind-of-school and building-society name at best," he once wrote to one of his children who had

misspelt it, "but it has two k's in it, if that is any consolation." Indeed, he always declared that he took his degree of Doctor of Civil Law as much to escape the sound of his Christian name as for any other reason. Fate, however, in this matter was too much for him. A philanthropist, in its more restricted sense, he never was, but Birkbeck Hill he remained to the end of his life, and probably will remain, so long as Boswell is read and his editor remembered.

Of his ancestry on his father's side he has himself written at large in his Life of his uncle, Sir Rowland Hill. "The detestation of tyranny and injustice," he there says, "and the ardent zeal in the cause of civil and religious liberty were, indeed, hereditary in most of the branches of Rowland's family. They were chiefly old Puritan stocks, with much of the narrowness, but all the integrity, of the best of the Non-conformists." Birkbeck Hill himself was wont to talk with pride of these sturdy ancestors of his, who feared neither injury nor death nor loss of fortune in the defence of freedom and in the pursuit of unrecorded deeds of charity.

If through his father he could claim a long descent from Midland farmers and tradesmen, whose chief characteristics were a vigorous independence, a strong sense of duty, and an ardent desire to leave the world, each in his turn, a better place for their brief span of life, from his mother Birkbeck Hill inherited the sensitiveness, poetry, and love of beauty natural to her Celtic blood. Once, in a speech delivered at Oxford after a St. David's Day dinner, he thus humorously described his descent: "I began by boasting that on my mother's side I had Welsh blood in me. Whenever I met my cousins on my father's side, and was overwhelmed by their common sense, I

rejoiced in myself that to this Teutonic common sense was added a large measure of Welsh sensibility. I recounted how, when I was a young fellow at my uncle's house at Wrexham, every evening he used to boast to me of the Welsh princes from whom we were sprung, but where they reigned, when they lived and what their names were I never could learn, for his recollections, though glorious, were indistinct, and the next morning, when history could have been studied more accurately, he never returned to the subject." To judge from these reminiscences of a conviviality wholly foreign to his father's people, it was also his Welsh blood which made Birkbeck Hill one of the most "clubbable" of men.

His mother's maiden name was Ellen Tilt Maurice, one of the same family as Frederick Denison Maurice; through his mother's mother, Theodosia Bache, a Huguenot ancestry was claimed, and through her Birkbeck Hill was akin to the "Brother Musicians," Edward and Walter Bache. There was thus much on his mother's side to mitigate the tendencies towards Utilitarianism, so pronounced in his father's family.

Of his mother Birkbeck Hill had no recollection. After one day turning over old letters of hers, in which she speaks of him, her three-year-old son, as "an especial treasure, so droll and intelligent," he wrote: "My poor mother, in all her love for me spread over four years, has not left a trace on my memory. In that, nature is indeed cruel."

She died when she was but thirty-two, leaving four little motherless children. Young as she was, she made her mark during her eight years of wedded life.

"That little woman is a genius," said Lord Brougham of her, after a chance conversation. And,

indeed, she possessed a keenness of intelligence and a charm which lingered long and vividly in the minds of those who had known her. Her brief married life must have been an ideally happy one. "You have made me so happy—now I will sleep," were her last words to her husband. Forty-six years later, when he, an old man of eighty-six, lay on his deathbed, his fingers closed round his daughter's hand. The touch of her wedding ring awoke the old sense of joy. "My wife!" he murmured, and surely no one undeceived him.

Birkbeck Hill, though not successfully christened a philanthropist, was, at any rate, born to be a schoolmaster. The school to whose headship he was predestined was a family institution, in its day both noted and notable. Founded at Birmingham in 1802 by Thomas Wright Hill, Birkbeck Hill's grandfather, it was afterwards moved to Bruce Castle, Tottenham, where it flourished for fifty years.

The beginnings of this school, at which were educated not a few well-known men, were exceedingly modest. Its principles were curiously identical with many theories which educationists nowadays propound as the results of the most enlightened and modern ideas. In stiff and old-fashioned language, the first prospectus sent out by Thomas Wright Hill sets forth his views, which are such as in these present days are preached by schoolmasters who claim to supersede obsolete methods and worn-out practices:—

"To ensure the co-operation of his pupils, T. Hill will make it his study to excite their reasoning powers and to induce in them habits of voluntary application; for this purpose varying the ordinary course of instruction, and, as occasion shall offer, drawing their attention to subjects more particularly fitted to interest

their feelings ; he will always endeavour, by kindness and patience, firmness and impartiality, to secure for himself their affection and esteem. And as he aspires to exhibit models of education, possessing higher excellencies than mechanical dexterity or mere intellectual acuteness, his anxious aim will be to make instruction in art and science, the culture of the understanding and of the physical powers, subservient to the nobler intention of fostering and maturing the virtues of the heart."

In the work of this school the sons of Thomas Wright Hill were associated as they were able to be of use. As little boys, they taught yet younger boys, or, if no teachers were needed, they aided their mother in the work of the house when their lessons with their father were over. Slowly, under the influence of this very remarkable band of brothers, the school grew and developed in every way, and became not only a most original and flourishing business, but also the very idol of the family, whose dogged perseverance and high qualities had created it. Sound scholarship was perhaps not its leading feature. Thomas Hill's sons had had little opportunity of acquiring any high standard of classical learning. What they aimed at teaching was what they had themselves learnt in life—reasonableness, a strict sense of duty, and a power of self-government, and these things they were in a remarkable degree successful in imparting to their scholars.

Birkbeck Hill's father, Arthur, besides being a fair Latinist, had indeed painfully taught himself Greek, but it was at the cost of an almost total wreck of his eyesight. In his ardent desire for knowledge he, as a youth, studied through the early winter hours before the ordinary labours of the day began. Insufficient

light and crabbed Greek texts so ruined his eyes that for the rest of his long life he was almost entirely dependent for the acquirement of knowledge on listening to reading aloud. Some compensation for his loss was found in his marvellous powers of learning by rote and of dramatically reciting what he had learnt. Few boys who came under his care failed to be influenced in their literary taste by his frequent recitations of whole plays of Shakespeare, which formed a part of Arthur Hill's scheme of education.

This scheme, good as much of it was, was, however, a constant source of regret to Birkbeck Hill in later years. Possibly he overrated its defects, or rather he underrated the benefits which his mind had received from its merits. Strenuous in many ways as the life at Bruce Castle must have been in the amount of self-government and self-education devolved on the boys, yet in the matter of actual study Birkbeck Hill bitterly complained of the want of accurate knowledge, which too often characterised the lessons. In the year 1888 he wrote :—

“How indolent I do grow in my old age, or rather, unwilling to make any great effort. How I regret that I never had really hard work—work that tried the thinking powers—to do when I was young. It was a great mistake in my father and his brothers so to make everything smooth and easy, that doggedness of mind was never attained. However, I must make one more effort at reformation, though, like Johnson's, I fear it will end in the record of a resolution.”

Perhaps the fact that Birkbeck Hill did much of his Johnsonian work, besides publishing some half-dozen other books on various subjects between the date of this letter and his death fourteen years later, proves that his complaint of his indolence was not

wholly just. Nor, probably, was his dissatisfaction with his education in its results any fairer. One advantage Bruce Castle possessed in an uncommon degree. There was an unusually large school library, and a love of reading was zealously promoted among the boys.

But however justly he may have regretted the low standard of scholarly attainments set before him as a boy, he had the deepest admiration for the beautiful qualities of his father's mind. He writes to him, in 1885, "I do not think your grandchildren will ever forget the 27th day of August [the old man's birthday]. It will live in their memories as the birthday of one whom they loved as much as they honoured and revered. It will be, I am sure, a memory fruitful in them of love and gentleness and courage and all good deeds. . . . I do not suppose that there ever was a schoolmaster so much beloved by his pupils. There never was, I know, a kinder father, and your grandchildren will say that there could not have been a dearer grandfather."

The home in which Birkbeck Hill was born and grew up was one to exercise a profound influence on him. Bruce Castle, whither the Hill family migrated from Birmingham in 1827, contained in its historic buildings and grounds beauties which sank deep into Birkbeck Hill's nature. The fine old Jacobean mansion known as Bruce Castle was but one of a series of massive buildings which had in turn stood on or near the same spot for seven hundred years. One "ivy-mantled tower," portion of the Castle, built when Henry VII. was king, yet existed, and indeed still exists. Foundations of much older buildings are yet to be traced deep beneath the surface of lawns from which the creeper-covered walls and turrets of the existing

mansion spring. The little park still loses its narrow limits beneath the shade of noble trees and deep shrubberies; the pink thorns still droop their fragrant boughs in May time over the old iron entrance gate, and the bees still murmur in hot June days among the limes. Little indeed is changed, except for "the spreading of the hideous town" around its park palings. When Birkbeck Hill played as a lad in its sunny meadows, or lay idling on his back under the noble cedar, listening to the rooks in the rookery which had been theirs from time immemorial, or to the soft spring call of cuckoo and wood-pigeon, the park stood one among many such pleasant flowery gardens which made the once small village of Tottenham famous for its blossoms. In those days Quakers, in broad hats and sweet prim gowns, still frequented the gardens, or passed to and fro beneath the stately avenue which led to the Castle park. Quakers and gardens alike have vanished. Happy is it that the one old mansion and still beautiful grounds of Bruce Castle have been saved for the public enjoyment, and that the meadows, where generations of happy children played, are for ever a place of rest, of pastime and of flowers.

For such a birthplace and, with one brief break, for such a home for forty-two years Birkbeck Hill could be thankful. Its beauty and spaciousness and historic interest fostered in him all the poetry and sensibility which, as he himself said, he inherited from his unremembered mother. In some respects it had, however, as indeed few homes have not, certain defects.

Bruce Castle was, for many years, a joint family house. By degrees certain members of the little band of brothers, sons of Thomas Wright Hill, who had all in turn taken their share of work in the family school, had gone into other professions and made themselves

other homes. The two brothers, Edwin and Arthur Hill, however, with their wives and families, still dwelt together in patriarchal fashion. In Arthur Hill was invested the Headmastership of the school, while his sister-in-law and her daughters took charge of all housekeeping details and care of the boys' health. All the five brothers, however, continued that close community both of fortune and interests in which they had always lived, and most matters of importance in the conduct of their lives were settled, as aforetime, in family conclave. The advantages of privacy and intimacy in their intercourse with their children were thus in some measure inevitably sacrificed to advantages of mutual help and support, which, in the eyes of the older generation, amply compensated for a scarcely felt loss. With the younger generation, whose blood-tie was only that of cousinship, this could not naturally be the case to the same extent. A double family living in one house, however strong the attachment and however ample the available space, must experience moments of friction. The two groups of cousins, however, found much happiness throughout their childhood in this community of life. It was only when increasing years brought forth increasing differences of character, and when successive marriages had thinned the little band of cousins, that the joint family life, instituted by the elder generation, was wisely brought to an end. Three years after leaving College, by the partial retirement of his father and the withdrawal of his uncle to another home, Birkbeck Hill was left Head of the family school and sole master of the family house.

Thither, in 1861, he brought the young wife whom he had married immediately on leaving Oxford, and there his work and hers was carried on for seventeen strenuous years. Two children had been already born

to them; five others followed, born, as their father before them, in the old home; a new generation of cousins in the close neighbourhood of the Castle also arose, so that the lawns and shady trees were at no time without children to rejoice in them. Surely no home ever made a deeper impression on the hearts of those who grew up within its walls.

The earliest letters written by Birkbeck Hill which have been preserved were written during a schoolboy holiday at Ambleside. They are, of course, only a boy's letters, but they are written by an intelligent boy, who took note of all he saw, and who was in the habit of seeing, perhaps, rather more than the average lad of thirteen. One scrap of a letter to his father records a little incident that Birkbeck Hill treasured as a small link between himself and a poet whom he greatly loved.

TO HIS FATHER.

"AMBLESIDE, *July 8, 1848.*

"I will tell you something which I think will greatly surprise you. Yesterday, that is Saturday, Mr. and Mrs. Wordsworth sent to ask how I was. Do you know Mr. Wordsworth? I think you told me you did not."

Wordsworth was not a friend of Arthur Hill's, and his inquiries were only instigated by his concern lest his acquaintance, Birkbeck Hill's host, should be troubled by a sick guest. In after years, when Birkbeck Hill's children gathered round while he read Wordsworth's poems aloud to them, at which times one little girl was wont to weep as for a close and personal sorrow for the fate of her namesake, Lucy Gray, he

would tell them this anecdote, and boast that the great poet had inquired after his health.

Whilst on this holiday at Ambleside, in 1848, he wrote to his father one day : "This is the last letter I shall write ; it is the thirty-seventh. I have received twenty-two, which I think is pretty well."

Fifty years earlier, when times were hard and letters cost shillings, Rowland Hill had watched his mother's terror lest the postman should claim the pence needed for bread. The new generation of Hills had become, through their uncle's labours, very spendthrifts and prodigals in their lavish use of the penny post. Two or three of these thirty-seven letters are interesting in the intimate light they throw on the habit of thought and morals in which the big family at Bruce Castle lived. Happily, virtuous indignation with smokers and fishers did not dim the boy's power of feeling the joy of life in mountain and leaping stream.

" AMBLESIDE, *June 23—July 15, 1848.*

"Yesterday we went to the waterfall called Stock Gill ; it is a fall 70 feet high. Across the river lower down than the waterfall a miller has thrown a dam which greatly spoils the beauty of the river, for it is the most beautiful river I ever saw ; it is nothing but a great number of cataracts. The water almost looks alive, for it seems to enjoy itself so.

"Yesterday we went to see an old lady whom we know very well. She had read the article in the *Daily News* about our distribution [of prizes], and she approved of what she read very much. She gave the same reasons as Lord Ebrington gave for disliking emulation, viz., that it excited evil passions and also ruined health. The poor boys of this place are much

more polite than those of Tottenham. I have never been annoyed here either by words or by deeds. The people are said to be exceedingly honest.

"I have been reading Shakespeare a good deal. I have not been reading any play right through, but I pick out such parts as I like. Yesterday two people whom I know caught sixty-four fish. I heard one of them boasting of it a great deal. I do not think there is much to boast of; on the contrary, I think a person ought to be sorry to have destroyed sixty-four animals, one of which even he cannot make again. But everyone here fishes, and thinks there is no harm in it. We have just finished reading *Henry IV*. In looking at Mr. Knight's edition of Shakespeare I saw a play called 'The Contention between the Houses of York and Lancaster.' I do not remember to have heard of such a play, or to have seen it in your Shakespeare. Mr. Knight also spells Shakespeare without the *a*, do you know if he had any authority for so doing? . . . We have finished *Midsummer Night's Dream*, for sometimes we read two acts in one night. I am very much interested in Macaulay's *History of England*. I have read 150 pages of it. What a good though brief account he gives of Charles First's reign and of the causes of the Restoration.

"We have now had a week of uninterrupted fine weather, which is a very good thing, for the hay is being cut now. The hay is mostly made by the inhabitants of the country, there are very few Irish here. They do not make hay with pitchforks, I have not seen a single one, but with their hands, and they do not use so many haymakers, only three or four to a good-sized field. I have finished the first volume of Macaulay, and am half-way through the second. It is quite as entertaining as any novel, even those of Scott,

and I feel that I understand English history a great deal better than I did. I am glad to say that I have accustomed myself to do without food for some time. To-day we breakfasted at nine, and I had nothing to eat from that time till seven except a piece of cake which we took with us. We walked sixteen or seventeen miles."

TO HIS FATHER.

"AMBLESIDE, *July 2, 1848.*

"When I hear two countrymen speaking I cannot understand them; I cannot well understand the servants. The carriages, or cars, as they call them, are very different from any I ever saw; the sides of the car I think are made of the same stuff as the boys' swimming belts, and the roof is supported on four poles; four people can sit in them, but I think their knees would touch. We go to church twice a day. . . . A steamer comes here four times a day. Some people think it spoils the lake, but I think it is very pretty."

"AMBLESIDE, *July 22, 1848.*

"Yesterday I was talking with a gentleman by the lake who is a great smoker. He smokes fourpenny cigars, and he smokes eight in a day, which comes to 18s. 8d. a week and to £48, 8s. a year. He says, judging by the increase in the revenue, there is more smoking than before. The Government gets about five millions a year by the duty on tobacco. The duty on those he smokes is 9s. 3d. per lb.; a pound contains 112 cigars. He said the unsatisfactory thing

in smoking is that there is nothing to show at the end of the year. He has smoked for twenty years, but of course he did not smoke so much at first. He says when he first began to smoke he felt as if he were intoxicated without the pleasure of drinking. What a great waste of money it is! He says he is very healthy, and walks a great deal."

To eat, in the eyes of Arthur Hill, was always somewhat of a concession to human weakness, and for the lad to go ten hours and walk seventeen miles on a slice of cake would certainly have been accepted as a proof of a meritorious sobriety.

One more of Birkbeck Hill's boyish letters may be included for the sake of the humorous account it gives of the fine scholar to whom he owed all his best early tuition. No one who has ever been a pupil of the Mr. Brade here mischievously described can ever forget him—a man whose immense scholarship rivalled his shyness, and whose unworldliness alone equalled both. In this letter Birkbeck Hill is bent only on playing the tease to his schoolmaster's bashfulness; later on, when he got to Oxford, he could appreciate the learning whose counterpart he in vain looked for among his College tutors.

TO HIS FATHER.

"WIGAN, *July* 17, 1854.

"I spent four days last week in Preston, or rather in its neighbourhood, for I was always out on some excursion, and enjoyed myself very fairly. I should have liked it much better if they had not been quite so assiduous in amusing me; some people seem to think that it is impossible for any enjoyment to be obtained

in a sitting posture, or rather I should say on a chair, or else I should include riding, and as the Dawsons happened to be of this sort, I was kept in a perpetual motion ; but yet I passed the time pleasantly enough. Every day I rode, once twenty miles, once fourteen, and have brushed up my riding wonderfully. The last day the pleasure and the amusement also of the excursion was much increased by Mr. Brade's company ; I never expected to see him ride, but he mounted on a pony, and really cut a very respectable figure, though as might be expected he was rather nervous, and pulled a queer face or two. Once, I am sorry to say, I considerably disturbed his gravity, for knowing that his pony had a hard mouth and could not endure to be beaten in a race I set off my horse at a gallop, and I am afraid before we pulled up again on entering town his bones had been sadly shaken. Once he and Hugh Dawson had a long argument at a cross-road as to which turning was the best to take, which Mr. Brade cut short of a sudden by trotting off by the way he preferred. At first I could not understand why it was worth disputing about so small a matter, till Dawson told me that the road he was for going by led before the houses of one or two bachelor friends of Mr. Brade's, and that he was always too bashful to exhibit before them.

“I was one day at Blackpool, and found it as sleepy and dull as most other seaside places. I was rather amused there by one of the fast men of ‘Proud Preston,’ who was evidently talking for me to admire. He was telling a friend of his that he had been rather expecting a challenge that day, and had almost wished for it, as he had intended to wing his man, and had naturally felt rather disappointed in missing the opportunity. If before people talk folly they would find out that

they have a fool to listen to them, it would be better for both talker and hearer. As it was, I found it difficult to restrain my laughter. Besides riding, I have had some boating, bathing, fencing, and shooting both with gun and pistol, and so I think I may call myself in pretty good practice for the Russians when they come. I wish you would ask Mr. and Miss Scott to pass the Michaelmas holidays and as much longer as they like at Bruce Castle; though I am not very sure that the former would have time to come, yet I think Miss Scott would both like a trip to London and would be able to manage it."

This mention of Miss Scott is noteworthy as the first among his letters of the girl who was afterwards his wife.

Among Birkbeck Hill's schoolfellows there were three boys, Edward, Thomas, and John Scott, sons of a solicitor of Wigan. Although the Scotts were younger than Hill, yet a friendship existed between them. During a long and dangerous illness of the eldest of these lads, a little incident occurred which changed a schoolboy friendship into a close and lifelong tie. Mrs. Edwin Hill, under whose care all school patients passed, was not unnaturally anxious to share her grave anxiety with one of Edward Scott's own family. The only member available was his sister Annie, at that time at school herself in the neighbouring village of Southgate, and to her Mrs. Edwin Hill sent. At this time Miss Scott was herself only a girl of fifteen, but she was already accustomed to play the part of mother to her motherless brothers. She came at once. That same day Mrs. Edwin Hill met Birkbeck on the stairs of Bruce Castle—those broad, shallow stairs with wide oaken banisters, which were, and still are, one of the

chief beauties of the old house. What a play-place have those old stairs been for generations of children ! What feats of jumping ; what laborious swarmings up the banisters, and what swift and glorious descents down them ; what slow creepings up the stairway in half-lit hours, when ghostly picture eyes of wigged gentlemen and powdered ladies followed the childish figures on their way to bed ! But on the day when Birkbeck Hill's future was settled on those same stairs, he had outgrown jumpings and slidings and terrors.

"I have a young lady to dinner, and your cousins are all away," said his aunt to him. "She is Ted Scott's sister. You must come and help me to entertain her."

"Scott's sister," to a schoolfellow of seventeen, possessed but mild attractions ; but Mrs. Edwin Hill's persistency won the day, and her nephew followed her into the dining-room.

In after years he would often tell his children how and where he had first seen their mother—a tall, slim girl, her black hair demurely tied with a bow of broad brown ribbon.

"And it was then that I made up my mind to marry her," was the end of the story. Two years later, an engagement was allowed between them by Miss Scott's father, though she was considered still too young for any formal announcement to be made. She was then seventeen and Birkbeck nineteen, just on the eve of entering Oxford. Letters were, happily, permitted, though their number was limited, cruelly enough in Birkbeck Hill's eyes. Miss Scott, perhaps because she was such a mere girl, but more likely because of a certain Puritan quality which was at all times one among the striking qualities of her mind, more contentedly acquiesced. To a motherless and very lonely girl any

letters at all must, too, have been a wonderful and welcome change.

In one of Birkbeck Hill's early letters to her he says : "As for your photographs, really I do not think they could be much better, though they have a little of the 'Margaret' of *North and South* about them. By the bye, how do you like that story? It has interested me very much."

There were characteristics of mind which may well have reminded the young lover of "Margaret Hale," as well as the smooth dark hair and grey eyes of his "lassie" of Lancashire. Life forced on her responsibilities at a time when most girls, especially present-day girls, think of little but lessons and games. It made demands on her unselfishness and wisdom which she met with a courage which few women, far her senior in years, could have surpassed. Throughout her life not many came across her who did not, at some moment, look to her for help, and none ever looked in vain. She met life with a high and steadfast purpose. Not all things could be achieved, but all things could be attempted, and with her to attempt meant prolonged and conscious effort. All things she did with her might, even her pleasures, even her rest, which seemed often to be fuller and busier than other women's work. One day one of her children, a little six-year-old daughter, whose passionate temper must often have added to her mother's labours, knelt at her knee. "Mother," she said, perhaps noticing the weary look in the loving eyes, "it is better to wear away than rust away."

No rust ever dimmed the mother's eager mind and heart, but she, not less than her husband, paid by years of suffering and ill-health for the years of overstrain in early life.

A little rough wooden box, full of her girlish letters

to her future husband, was found after his death. Some of the contents are of even earlier date than her engagement, and are addressed to her schoolboy brothers. Sisterly scolding of Johnnie for eating too many apples, and entreaties to Tom to be good and make his pocket-money last, can have had no inherent right to survive. That they have been kept among those to her youthful lover goes to prove his assertion of love at first sight, for he must have possessed himself of them for the sake of the prim little allusions to be found to "young Mr. Hill" in them.

Fifty years in the lapse of time have raised the age of heroines by ten years. Annie Scott, at seventeen, had at least to fulfil the duties, as well as claim the privileges, of a mature woman. She, like her future husband, had been left motherless at a very early age. But when Mr. Arthur Hill was left a widower, his wife's sister, Miss Theodosia Maurice, came to be his devoted and lifelong companion. In her his children found an affectionate aunt, and his children's children one who stood in the place of the grandmother whose name they always gave her. The Scott children had no such happiness. A most affectionate father they indeed possessed, but his business was engrossing, and his house too lonely for young children. At six years of age Annie was sent to school; at fifteen she returned home, schooldays done, to keep her father's house and "mother" her brothers to the best of her ability.

A big rambling house it was, standing in the Standishgate in Wigan, an old house with Catholic traditions clinging to it of hunted priests and hiding holes, which possessed certain terrors for Annie in childhood and, perhaps, even after her return home in all the dignity of mistress-ship.

The letters written from the old house in Standish-

gate are wonderfully characteristic. Society she had none ; of friends very few—and of those few scarce any of her own age. Criticisms of books, difficulties with an elderly and tyrannical cook, anxiety over her high-spirited brothers, stitchings to prepare them for school, long discussions over their future careers, projects to prepare herself for her married life ; such are the topics on which she writes, mingled with scoldings of her too impatient lover and schemings for speedy meetings. That she found time in her lonely and yet busy life to study is proved by more than one letter written in very fair Spanish. Twenty years later she taught herself to be a good German scholar, and, still later, she learnt to read Italian fluently. French, of course, she both read and spoke easily, if not elegantly ; but whatever she learnt in later years was mastered, as in her girlish years in Wigan, by her own unaided perseverance.

But the loneliness and quiet life came to an end in 1857. After her engagement was once announced, frequent intercourse between the two families naturally resulted : the tie was drawn yet closer by the marriage, in 1857, of Annie's father, Mr. Edward Scott, with Birkbeck Hill's sister, Laura. For the young wife a country house was taken, and here, for a year and a half, the two girls, who had long been friends and who were so soon to become sisters-in-law, passed their time together, "feeling," as Annie wrote, "like peacocks, when we reflect what splendid examples we are to all the world of step-mothers and daughters."

Of the many letters written by Birkbeck Hill to his future wife throughout the four years of his engagement, scarce one now exists. In the last year of her life Mrs. Birkbeck Hill copied out such parts as she wished to be preserved and destroyed the originals. "I have

kept what is of interest," she said, perhaps not realising that it is so often those bits of letters, seemingly devoid of public interest, which best reveal character, as well as best paint those small surroundings of life which go so far in the shaping of character. Such portions of the letters as she thought it well to keep are, for the most part, descriptive of his Oxford life.

Thither Birkbeck Hill was sent in the spring of 1855. The College selected by his father was Pembroke. It was not, perhaps, at that time the best College which could have been selected for a studious and somewhat peculiar lad. Nevertheless, it was a fitting coincidence which made him a member of Dr. Johnson's college; certainly, in after years, he valued no recognition of his scholarship more highly than the honorary Fellowship with which his College honoured him.

Birkbeck Hill's Oxford life was, in one sense, an intellectual catastrophe; a time of rude shock and much keen criticism of all that life had hitherto taught him; happily it was also the beginning of a new life—mentally a new birth. And, as in similar cases, where a lad leaves suddenly a vigorous but somewhat narrow home atmosphere to enter a world of new thoughts, new feelings, new aspirations, the strife engendered brought with it no little suffering. His home influences, clinging strongly to him, made him alone among Freshmen when he first went up; just as the influences under which he quickly fell at Oxford caused him to be, later on, frequently out of harmony with those with whom he had been educated in such close intimacy and family affection.

This clash between the old life and the new bred in him a sense of discontent. In a certain measure Oxford robbed him of his home; it did not all at once supply him with a fulness of life with which to replace

what he had lost ; still less did it immediately teach him how to harmonise the old and the new ideals, the old and the new duties.

Throughout his letters written to his father during the three years and a half which he spent at Oxford his deep affection for him remained undiminished, but it was to Miss Scott that he poured out all his joy in the new world of poetry and beauty which was opened to him by the magic touch of such men as Burne-Jones, William Morris, and Charles Faulkner. It was to her that he related the literary talks of the Old Mortality Club ; to her he confessed his old-time heresies and his new faiths. His friendships at Oxford were, for him, as for many a man, the real education which he gained there. A long and severe illness early in his career put academic distinction out of his grasp, for it was many months before his mind regained its old power of hard and long hours of study.

Just before he first went to Oxford, Miss Scott wrote to him : "I have never forgiven your cruelty about the sixty hours' work a week that day in the Bruce Castle drawing-room." Six months later she wrote : "I like to think that when *I* could not take you from your eight-hour day, that Faulkner and poetry cannot." But, after his illness in 1856, he was obliged to lessen his hours of work, probably very much to his advantage. Oxford, in his case and with his bringing up, had better things to bestow than even scholarship. Few of her sons have quitted her more profoundly affected by her influence than Birkbeck Hill, and none have more gladly and gratefully acknowledged the benefits she bestowed on him.

A letter, written just before his entrance into Oxford, shows him still keenly interested in the projects which were so engrossing to his family circle. He

hopes in it that he, too, will be "found a worthy labourer in the good cause." Oxford did not rob him of his humanitarianism, but it widened his horizon and taught him how many were the good causes needing labourers, and it convinced him that his own powers lay in other directions than in promoting social reforms, however needful and however noble in themselves.

TO MISS SCOTT.

"HEATH HOUSE, *January 2, 1855.*

"On Christmas Day we went to see the children at the Ragged School (in St. James's Back, Bristol) have their dinner, and a very interesting sight it was. We went into a large rough sort of a room with benches rising one above another, at which were seated fifty or sixty boys; on the other side of the room were nearly as many girls. On the tables before them were huge masses of roast beef and bread, which the children were eyeing with hungry-looking eyes, as they were not allowed to touch till all arrangements were made. To pass the time they sang songs, and very well, too, the master leading them and giving out the verses. At length everything was ready, and I was wondering what the signal would be for them to commence operations, when an elderly gentleman mounted on a stool, and had actually the barbarity to keep them some minutes from their dinners by a religious discourse. Well! everything must have its end, and so they set to. The very way they ate showed where they came from. Though most of them had knives and forks they hardly seemed to know how to use them, but tore the meat with their fingers and teeth. The bearing-in of the plum-puddings seemed the grand

event of the day; the *steamers*, as they called them. There was such a loud clap, in which the master, suiting himself to the children, led the way, and then they fell to. Soon wailing was heard from one corner of the room, or rather, to use a less romantic word, a squalling, and on investigating the state of the case it was found that two or three poor little children had had no pudding. This was soon rectified, and matters went on smoothly again. My cousins teach here and help Miss Carpenter, who established this as well as other schools, not a little. I look forward to the time when we also may set our hands to the plough, for I hope that one day or other I may be found a worthy labourer in the good cause.

“On Saturday we went to a gentleman’s house where there was an American Anti-Slavery advocate, who told us some curious facts. He had been stoned more than once in different cities, and keeps as geological specimens the stones with which he was pelted. He told us that in one place he found that the Baptist minister who preached the Gospel on Sunday employed the other six days of the week in hunting slaves with bloodhounds. You should hear my uncle’s indignation at this. I almost think he will explode some day or other, he does so puff himself out at this hypocrisy.”

CHAPTER II

Matriculation at Pembroke College—"My rooms"—A foolish set of Freshmen—A day in Oxford described—Discontent with his lectures—Sunday lecture from Dr. Jeune—A new friend found in John Nichol of Balliol—The Old Mortality Club—"Little Go, or Smalls."

ON March 1st, 1855, Birkbeck Hill went up to Pembroke College to matriculate. Oxford, the "sweet city with her dreaming spires," drew him forth to wander in wonder and delight at an hour when most were scarce yet awake. The ways of the University dignitaries pleased him less. Dr. Jeune, the Master of Pembroke, shocked him by the lack of ceremony he showed to the lads up for their matriculation. "I was rather surprised at his not shaking hands with us, as did none of the other tutors, and when we went away there was no more ceremony. However, I believe this to be the custom at Oxford, though a very bad one I am sure, for (letting alone common politeness, which would surely have required at least a 'Good-bye' or something of that sort) one cannot be surprised at the Heads having little hold over the men if they are not at all friendly with them." The Examination troubled him little, although only he and one other succeeded out of the five who presented themselves. More trying than the Sophocles and Horace which he "offered" was the length of time he was detained fasting in the Hall on the day of his examination, for he was not released till 3.30,

after five hours' work following a long walk and an early breakfast.

The labours of the day ended with a visit to the Vice-Chancellor, whither he and his successful companion were conducted in a new cap and gown, by Mr. Price, then a young tutor of the College of which he was later so distinguished a member and ultimately Master. "I wish you could have seen the dignity with which I bore myself; I am sure the eyes of all the ladies must have been upon me," he writes to Miss Scott. "We were kept waiting some time at the Vice-Chancellor's, but at last he entered, a curious-looking old man, one who would make a good model to a picture of some fiery old martyr. He did not take the slightest notice of us, but opened a book in which we had to sign our names. I believe that the signing meant to say that we agreed to obey all the statutes, and that we believed in the Thirty-Nine Articles; only they never told me, and I was not so foolish as to ask, thinking it best to be ignorant of the matter. At the door was his servant with a book in which we wrote our names, and paid £2, 12s. for it, and then the ceremony was over. . . . On returning to my hotel I had tea, and I am sorry to say that I finished off the teapot, which was not of the smallest. Of course, I was all wide awake again, and my pulse at 80. No sleep for me, I knew, for many hours. Luckily I had taken a book with me, and so I set myself to read before the coffee-room fire. Before long the door burst open, and in tumbled two 'men' in their caps and gowns, who having saluted the chambermaid in a way I could by no means approve of, and calling, one for whisky and the other for brandy, sat down to make themselves comfortable. In spite of this rather fast entry, I was pleased to find that they were to me very polite and obliging, answering all

my questions, giving me information, and shaking hands at parting. These may be very quiet men for Oxford, as they spoke of some 'very fast' men they knew."

Such was Birkbeck Hill's first introduction to Oxford life, but six weeks had still to pass before he could go into residence in all the glory of his new condition of Freshman. In the meantime the interests and authors of his old home still claimed him. He wrote from Bruce Castle towards the end of March.

TO MISS SCOTT.

"*March* 1855.

"On Saturday I went with Pearson Hill on the L.N.W. Railway as far as Tring in the travelling Post Office, to try his new invention about taking in and throwing out extra post-bags. Everything turned out very well; as we were going past Watford at a considerable rate, we threw out two bags of 75 lbs. each, and took in one of an equal weight.

"I really have not formed my judgment as to which of Longfellow's poems I like best. "The Psalm of Life" is very fine, and so also is the one where he talks of standing on the bridge. I must introduce you next August to a great favourite, though a new one, of mine—Chaucer. I have not much of his works, but that which I have is beautiful. His description of the parish priest, the ploughman, and the poor Oxford scholar are true to this day. You must not be daunted by the antiquated style and spelling, as they are very soon surmounted, and of a truth one who can decipher my hieroglyphical writing need never be daunted at the Father of the English Poets. . . . Only four more weeks and then I really am an Oxford man!"

“BRUCE CASTLE, *April* 1, 1855.

“On Tuesday night I went with a friend of mine, Mr. Walters, to the House of Commons in hopes of seeing some great fun. Of course, as it was my first visit, it was a great novelty, but the speaking was very indifferent; two Irishmen talking about the grievances of Ireland, how she was robbed by the rest of the kingdom, and a great deal more stuff, during which (very luckily, as I thought) there was so much noise in the House that most of what they said was lost. One of them who spoke for about half an hour only had six lines in the *Times*, much to his disappointment no doubt. I saw Palmerston, and heard his voice for a minute.”

Birkbeck Hill, whilst listening to the “stuff” talked by two Irishmen, was far from foreseeing how ardent a believer he was to become in the justice and wisdom of Home Rule some thirty years later.

In April 1855 he went into residence in Oxford, and his letters thence to Miss Scott and his family give a lively and connected account of his life there. Those to Miss Scott are of special value in showing the evolution of his opinions, and indeed his whole mental condition, during his three years among new friends and new surroundings.

TO HIS FATHER.

“PEMBROKE COLLEGE,
“*April* 20, 1855.

“I cannot head this letter ‘my rooms’ yet, as they have not been allotted to me. . . . I arrived here at one o’clock very comfortable and cool (I do not mean



BRUCE CASTLE, TOTTENHAM.
From a photograph—about 1870

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by Fahrenheit, as the day was hot enough), and seized on a scout immediately. I took Hood's [Tom Hood's son] advice of a tip, which I interpreted at half a crown, and which seemed quite sufficient. The man became very polite and zealous, and really has taken so much trouble and told me so many things that I think the money was not ill spent. . . . I took a stroll in Christchurch meadows, through the whole avenue of elms and by the Isis. I was rather amused by an announcement which caught my eye, viz., 'Sam Beesley the original old Cherwell boatman and saved the lives of many gentlemen.' We dined at 5.30. The dinner is on a very good plan, as one can have a certain variety of dishes or not according to inclination and depth of pocket. Roast mutton was the joint, and then a bill of fare was brought round for puddings, etc., for which extra is charged, and thus I daresay I shall be able to make a considerable saving."

"April 22.

"As for my bedroom—excepting that it holds a bed it does not deserve that title—it can boast that great convenience of having a centre from which one can reach all the other parts. . . . Still the magic words 'my rooms' supply the place of every deficiency, repaper the walls, push out the walls, polish up the door, and create chairs in abundance. My sitting-room is much better, about 16 feet long by 14 feet broad, and not 50 yards from College."

TO HIS BROTHER LEWIN.

". . . As for *Father's* (not *papa's*) ingenious suggestions for the motive of my second stroll, viz. to show off my uniform, they are like too many other of the specula-

tions of that subtle, perhaps, but certainly airy man,—as for instance those displayed in a recent lecture,—in that though very plausible and I may say specious, they are yet totally wanting in historic support! That I should be so fresh as to wear my gown between two o'clock and dinner, or when out of the town at any hour whatever, is monstrous on the very face of it."

To Miss Scott.

"April 26, 1855.

"I have not yet attended any Latin lecture, but I shall not have much difficulty in them; it is the Greek that gives me work, for though I could translate every line almost in the play correctly, yet Mr. Henney asks me so many difficult grammatical questions (a subject I have not as yet much attended to) that I have to be very careful. He is particularly fierce in verbs in *mi* and the middle voice, and really I think, according to Sidney Smith, has altogether shown himself fit to be a bishop. To-day he got very angry with another Freshman who had been very idle (for they are, I can assure you, much worse than even our little boys in that respect), and gave him a severe rating. It is amusing to see how childish most of them are when Mr. Henney's head is turned; one makes a feint of throwing the inkstand at him, or makes a grimace, and what is worse they are always prompting each other, of course on the sly. . . . Dinner is at 5.30. All the Freshmen (6) sit at one table, and a very stupid set it is. First there are two who have been schoolfellows and who seem to have a sort of freemasonry, for though they hardly ever say a word, yet when that word does come there are convulsions of laughter, though no one

can make out why. The third is the only one I know here, except Hood, and he is not a genius. The fourth smiles a good deal, though I cannot say at what, but is as silent as the rest. The sixth is the one whom Mr. Henney scolded, and to say of him that he is a conceited young puppy would be nothing but flattery. His conversation may be after this kind: 'What an old beast that Henney is! What a pig he is! Everyone knows that he eats so much, that he always orders double commons.' And so this intellectual individual goes on. . . . My breakfast I take with *Lalla Rookh*, first a little of one, and then a little of the other. Some might object to poetry and beef together, but no, they are in the wrong. Think with what pleasant associations I shall always go to the book. What visions will float before me!"

"PEMBROKE COLLEGE, OXFORD,

"April 28, 1855.

"What am I to tell you of my life, as it is utterly impossible without causing a panic in the paper market, and if I used quills, consternation among the geese, to describe to you one quarter of this eventful week. First as to my rooms. My chamber is in the College (as at Oxford no one is allowed to sleep out until he has kept twelve terms), and a wee place it is, so small that with my bath there is no room for even one chair. It has moreover the misfortune of being next to and almost under the staircase, and what with a noisy fellow, though that is much too complimentary a term to apply to him, next door, I find it is of no use to go to bed before twelve. My sitting-room, in which I am now writing at about 9 p.m., is in Pembroke Street, within a stone's throw of the College, and is on the

whole a pleasant room. As it is on the first floor, it cannot be spied into from the street, but commands from a large window looking south, and so very pleasant when the sun is out, a view of over the way, comprising also the tops and tassels of students' caps passing underneath. My books, which I have increased by about twenty volumes since I came here, are exposed to the best advantage, for a good show here is thought very much of, perhaps about as much as their use.

"At 8 a.m. we attend Chapel, which by dint of quick reading, almost I am afraid gabbling, is generally got over in twenty-five minutes. On Saints' days and Sundays it is longer, as we have the Litany and Communion, the former indeed on Wednesdays and Fridays also. I then run over to my lodging to breakfast. I will send you a list of my lectures. From 10 to 11 a.m. I have either Mathematics with Mr. Price or Cicero with Mr. Evans, at 12 *Œdipus Tyrannus* with Mr. Henney on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, and, also with him, Greek Testament on Saturdays. On Sundays a Divinity Lecture with Dr. Jeune. Besides this, every week there is a passage of the *Spectator* to be turned into Latin of about twenty lines. Of all these lectures there is only the *Œdipus Tyrannus* that I much care about, for any advantage to be gained from them, for as I have read all the books before, and as also Mr. Brade is in my opinion, and as far as I can yet judge, a better scholar than any here, a repetition is not very favourable to me. In Mr. Evans's lecture, where I used to go swimmingly through two hundred lines with Mr. Brade, I now hear fifty or sixty hemmed and hawed through, spoiling all the beauty which most likely the men never dream of as existing.

"After lectures I return to my rooms and work till

I get hungry, which is generally about 2 p.m., and then usually go and buy a penny roll, which is much cheaper than lunching in College. This I consume during an hour's stroll, and then return to work till 5.15, when I have to prepare for dinner at 5.30. Dinner over, I have another stroll. A cup of tea at 7.30, and then I set to work till ten or so, when I take my old evening walk till eleven.

"And now you know my day. And how do I like it? Well—on the whole, though of course it does not come up to my former dreams. It is, of course, a very great pleasure and convenience to have rooms entirely to myself; to know that as I leave my books so shall I find them; that I may open and shut a window when I please, take my meals at what time I like, and so on; but there is one thing I very much miss, and which I had counted on as being sure of obtaining here, and which in its due season will most likely come, for a week is but a short time, and that is a friend. You cannot think how sometimes I long for someone to talk to, whom I would like to be liked by. Not a Pembroke man has called on me, and to tell you the truth I do not expect many, as I am not going the right way to make friends by my not taking wine. Hood, the son of the poet, asked me to come to his rooms and take a glass, and he I daresay would have introduced me to some friends, but I refused, giving him my reasons, and so that avenue is shut; and really to tell the truth I do not think there are half a dozen men in Pembroke that I should care to know from the little I see of them. I cannot say I have the highest opinion of the undergraduates, and no one could possibly guess from their behaviour that they were destined to be mostly clergymen.

"My carving at dinner is made great use of, as I found

I was the only one at the Freshmen's table who had any scientific ideas on the subject. In a week or two it will come to my turn to choose every day what we will have for dinner, but I think I shall try and get someone else to do it for me, as it is not the best thing for a young man to deliberate and bring up the pros and cons for every dish. If I cannot effect this, the best way will be to order as my Uncle Frederic does when he stays at an inn, the same thing every day."

TO HIS FATHER.

"PEMBROKE COLLEGE,
"May 6, 1855.

"I am going on pretty much the same as when I last wrote, the only change being that I now take two hours' walk before dinner instead of after tea, when I work, and the alteration is, I think, up to the present beneficial. I find I am in better health here than at home, and I think the hours for meals suit me, only two a day, for a captain's biscuit in the middle of the day and a cup of tea at night can never aspire to the dignity of the name. I never now have to resort to any shifts to get to sleep, perhaps to the detriment of the little poetry I know by heart, and I have no restless nights. I take good long walks, and am getting pretty familiar with the country, which is really very pretty, though rather hard for a stranger to explore owing to the number of streams, and on two days finding my way suddenly barred by a river I had to put on my utmost speed to be in time for Hall (dinner). There are no grand views, or none perhaps altogether beautiful, but many very pretty. One is continually coming on snug little villages, with

curiously built cottages and odd little churches, where the whole world except half a dozen children and a cat or so seems to be asleep, like those Irving so well describes, and from these one can always find some pleasant field-path back to Oxford, to which the way is easily traced by means of the towers and spires. . . .

"I am not much better pleased with the way the lectures are gone through than before. Really, if Dante were to represent any of the poets in the wrong region, he could not have devised any greater torment than letting their spirits be present when a party of 'men' are doing so many lines of him. One or two bring translations with them either in the same book as the text or else another, and while they are pretending to be translating, sometimes even pretending to be hesitating for a word, they are in reality using their 'crib' as they call it, and of course there are others who think this an excellent joke. . . .

"On one point I found myself deficient (besides a knowledge of Greek verbs, in which I am glad to say I have at last caught up any in my lecture), and which I think of very great importance and worthy of attention, and that is the language of Euclid. I really was somewhat mortified to find how many corrections were made in the first propositions I did, for I had hardly looked at the book, trusting to my being able to demonstrate them myself. But simple demonstration and one according to Euclid are very different things, and moreover the enunciation of each had to be written down, in all of which I fell short. The way Euclid is taught at Bruce Castle does not provide for this at all, as every step is done by the whole class together, and this I must say I think is the best way of teaching; but yet it would be very useful if the other were also introduced—if some days were set apart for individual

practice, so that each one may learn unaided to perform the whole proposition himself, and use as much as possible the very same phrases as Euclid. The progress of the class will certainly be slower, but it appears to me that what is learnt will be learnt much better, not merely in reference to the use of the correct terms, but also to the fact that the whole train of reasoning will be carried on by one mind. In Mr. Brade's class the examinations were so conducted, but if I remember rightly the wording did not have any weight. Talking of Mr. Brade, I have altogether come to the conclusion that he is a much better scholar and teacher than any here. I daresay in one or two departments, as for instance Latin composition, owing to unremitted practice, they may be more ready. However, for exactness of translation, or choice of language or historical illustration, they are inferior to him.

"I have already had to give a scolding to the clerk of the kitchen for overcharging me. I found that for one week in which I had once had pudding it had been charged for six days, and that for tea a commons of bread and butter had been entered, whereas I do not eat anything."

TO MISS MAURICE.

"PEMBROKE COLLEGE,
"May 13, 1855.

"Dr. Jeune takes the Divinity lecture, and we are doing the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, which is very hard indeed, both in style and more especially in matter, and this is not at all relieved by our being told, and not seldom, too, that the Authorised Version is quite wrong. To-day, indeed, Dr. Jeune went so far as to say that if anybody who was not assured of the Divine

origin of the Bible were to be shown a certain passage he would pronounce it to be absurd."

TO MISS SCOTT.

"PEMBROKE COLLEGE,
"May 14, 1855.

"This part of the week, beginning on Friday night and going on, Sunday included, to Tuesday, is the busiest part of all; for first there is the *Spectator* paper¹ on Saturday morning, and then the Greek Testament, and on Sunday there is Dr. Jeune's lecture on the *Epistle to the Hebrews*—the most dreadful of all, for besides the great difficulty of the subject, it is in the Hall, and attended by almost all the undergraduates, at least seventy, and he who is called on to translate advances into the middle and there reads it as loudly and as distinctly as his feelings permit him. I had understood that Freshmen were never called up, and for the first two lectures that was the case, but still I had determined to prepare myself as well as I could. So after Chapel and breakfast I set to work with a good will till the bell rang. Off I went, and the lecture went on. When the second man had finished reading his piece, and I was sitting very comfortably reflecting on what we had heard, judge what I felt when Dr. Jeune called out, 'Mr. Hill.' There was no help for it, so I left my place and advanced to the middle and began, though not in a very loud voice, I assure you. After reading nearly twenty lines, he told me to translate, which I did very fairly, till at last after ten minutes, to me an age, I was allowed to return to my seat. It is a more trying thing to me, I think, than to most men, for there are not many who

¹ A passage from the *Spectator* to be turned into Latin.

have, as I have, for the last three or four years had no one but their tutor to hear them. I do not know why I was put on first. In three other of the lectures I am asked more questions or translate more than the rest, but there is reason for that, as the tutors there have soon found out that I prepare the lessons with more care; but as for Dr. Jeune, I have never spoken to him since I came up.

"I think I am in a fair way to make one good friend. You remember, I daresay, my telling you I had a distant relation here, by name Symonds, the first doctor in the town. . . . He asked me to his house to a musical party. There he introduced me to a Freshman of Balliol—Nichol by name, and son, I believe, of the Professor of Astronomy at Glasgow. We began to talk, and agreed to take a long walk together the following day, which we accordingly did. I found him unusually well-read and intelligent, in fact more so than any young man of his age that I ever met. I breakfasted with Hood the Sunday before last. It was an odd party, odd in company and conversation, and in the breakfast itself. The company consisted of six altogether, who pretty equally divided the host's attention, the last two, however, getting best cared for. Besides H. and myself, there were two other men, one who goes the usual pace, and the other decidedly fast, and two little dogs who were made much of. Then for the conversation, it varied principally between parodies and pipes, Tennyson and shirt-pins; in my humble opinion a 'Medley' no unfit companion for the 'Princess.' Hood has one table covered with nothing but pipes, not for use but ornament. I counted twenty on it, and then the walls were decorated with them also."

This letter to Miss Scott, telling of an "acquaintance with a Freshman of Balliol, Nichol by name,"

marks the date when Birkbeck Hill's real Oxford life began.

Not only was Nichol himself a most valuable friend, but he was also the means of bringing Birkbeck Hill into contact with a set of men whose keen intellectual interests speedily filled up the weary emptiness left by the stupidity of Pembroke Freshmen ; on the other hand, the originality both of Hill's character and of the training he had received made him a welcome companion among the men to whom his new acquaintance presently introduced him.

Out of this little group was formed the Old Mortality Club, one of those small sets of undergraduate friends which is at all times so common a feature of university life, but which was noticeable among its fellows by the distinguished positions in the world which the large majority of its members subsequently achieved. Its membership was restricted to a small number, not at any time probably exceeding a dozen. Among the original twelve were Professor Nichol, Professor Dicey, Mr. Algernon Swinburne, Professor T. H. Green, the Right Honourable James Bryce, Dr. Caird, Master of Balliol, Dr. Birkbeck Hill, and Mr. Justice Wright. Professor Holland joined soon after. One other, Mr. Luke, student and tutor of Christchurch, stood out among the rest by the beauty and originality of his character. His early and most tragic death left a gap not easily filled. To Birkbeck Hill this lost friend remained always a most beautiful memory, and to him he owed much of the very best influences of his college career. Luke's was a name mentioned with a certain tenderness of voice even to the end of life. Like all the founders of the Club, Birkbeck Hill never quite lost his sense of fellowship with its members, however far circumstances might have drifted them apart ; generally,

however, Old Mortality men kept their friendships green and fresh throughout life.

In the midst of such a set Birkbeck Hill was speedily plunged into a new world of literature. Tennyson no longer mingled with shirt-pins, and little dogs over a breakfast with a fast set ceased to be sneered at. According to one contemporary, who was not, however, an Old Mortality man, "they were a revolutionary set, and read Browning." Carlyle and J. S. Mill were certainly now first enthusiastically read by Hill. But whatever they read and whatever they thought, everything was discussed with a keenness and freedom wholly delightful and useful to the Pembroke undergraduate.

TO MISS SCOTT.

"PEMBROKE COLLEGE,

"*May* 28, 1855.

"I am getting to know Nichol better, although I think he is hardly the friend I picture to myself, and in fact, I daresay, the man does not exist, but still I think we shall do very well. He is really very clever, and a bit of a genius too, I think with a touch of the poet's vein, though unfortunately all I have seen of his writings smacks too much of Tennyson and incomprehensibility for my taste. However, I daresay he will take the highest honours, if he does not ruin his health with imprudent study, and departing leave behind him footprints on the sands of time."

TO HIS FATHER.

"PEMBROKE COLLEGE,
" *May* 20, 1855.

"Would you send me the translation of the Ode of Horace, beginning 'Persicos odi puer apparatus' [*Odes* i. xxxviii.]. I want to show it to Nichol, who translates most beautifully. I am still in want of acquaintances, and have almost always to take my walk by myself, for my friend Nichol is not quite so prudent as I am in exercising and stints himself too often to a stroll, and moreover he knows more men in Balliol than I do in Pembroke, and so he rarely comes with me. I find in comparing notes with Nichol that Balliol is much cheaper than Pembroke. His weekly battels are always under a pound, sometimes not 16s., while mine, which are, I believe, the lowest, have not yet been below 21s., and I do not think I can reduce them much lower."

When Birkbeck Hill made Oxford his home some five-and-thirty years later, he was fond of repeating an old Pembroke scout's defence of his College in comparison with Balliol. "In Pembroke, sir, we *lives*; at Balliol they *exists*." If in his undergraduate days he yet *lived* whilst going without pudding, his friend Nichol's *existence* must have indeed been hard.

TO MISS SCOTT.

"BRUCE CASTLE,
" *June* 25, 1855.

"At last I am at home again, after passing through a very wearisome and anxious week at Oxford, for I was

in for my first university examination, and though it is only the Little Go, or Smalls, yet being the first I was at times rather nervous. The examination began last Thursday week, and at ten o'clock of the morning of that day I went, with a white choker on, to the Divinity School (as they call the rooms where we are examined) in company with nearly a hundred other men, while eighty others turned to another School. The doors were not opened for some time, and there we were all speculating on what subject the first paper would be set, as that is never known beforehand. At last we were let in, and there before us we saw nearly a hundred little tables with paper, two pens and ink, and a paper on arithmetic, containing, I suppose, about thirty sums, chiefly in decimal and vulgar fractions. As the time allowed was only two hours and a half, I had barely time to finish them all, nor any to look them over. In the afternoon we had two hours for nine questions on Euclid, which you may imagine was also but a short allowance of time. In this, however, I was completely successful.

"While the examinations go on the two examiners either patrol the room or perch themselves in high pulpits to inspect the doings of the men, for there is so much cheating that they have to keep a sharp look-out. On Friday we found a most formidable paper on grammar, but luckily with three hours to do it in, and in the afternoon we were all thrown into the height of alarm and consternation by being limited to an hour and a half for a paper to be rendered into Latin.

"After coming out from the Latin prose examination, some of us Pembroke men compared papers together, and though I was at first quite confident that I had written one sentence quite grammatically, yet at last all my kind friends assuring me it was

completely wrong and would tell very badly, I was brought into a state of complete misery, for to be plucked at Smalls is very disgraceful indeed. I wandered about, wondering how I should ever come home or return to Oxford, and revolving plans in my brain of either bolting to Australia or throwing myself into the Isis; but luckily another man assured me that he thought it was not so bad an error, and advised me to consult the tutor next morning after Chapel. A most restless night I had, and with most uncomfortable feelings I followed Mr. Henney to his rooms. After asking him if he would look over my paper and telling him I thought I had done very ill, he was very kind, and told me to sit down and he would examine it. So he took it and began to read it aloud. Much to my joy, he passed over the sentence without any comment, and on my questioning him more particularly about it, said it was perfectly correct, and when he had finished assured me that I had done very fairly. You may believe with what joy I ran off to tell all my *dear* friends.

"Though my paper work was over on Friday, yet I had to wait till the following Friday for my *vivâ voce* examination, as by the arrangement they adopted, my name was very low down on the list. Though everyone assured me I was quite safe, yet I could not feel at all so certain myself, but became at times a little uncertain. When it came (as we say) to the scratch, I felt as cool and comfortable as could be, and almost all my anxiety had passed away. I found a piece of the *Antigone* to translate, but before I could finish it I was called up for *vivâ voce*; a second passage from the *Antigone* was given me, and as I had read it over so often (you may remember that I was doing it when you were here) I could hardly make a mistake. At

the end the examiner said 'Thank you,' which though it seems to you perhaps of little moment, yet is always known at Oxford as a mark of great approbation, and is but sparingly bestowed. He then required me to parse a few words, and was next going to set me on to Cicero. But I respectfully declined, as I was taking in dear old Horace, where I knew he could not *stump* me. He persisted at first that I had entered Cicero, but at length, on consulting his books, he found I suppose his mistake, and turned to Horace. Of course I was at home there, and after doing a dozen lines, received a second 'Thank you,' and with a little more grammar was told that when I had finished my *Antigone* paper I might go; and thus I was out in little more than an hour, while many unfortunate fellows were kept there three, four, or even five hours. The examiners were so long in deliberating on the fate of one or two unfortunates that we were kept till half-past five before I could obtain my *testamur*, and I did not leave Oxford till eight—nor arrive at home till twelve."

CHAPTER III

A revolutionary request—Charles Faulkner and the Pre-Raphaelites—
“Dickadees, Topsy, and Ned”—Scorn of Metaphysics—Birmingham
Grammar School in the forties—Swinburne—Rebellion against the
“worship of Facts”—Jowett’s lectures on Plato—Stanley on Ecclesi-
astical History.

TO MISS SCOTT.

“PEMBROKE COLLEGE,

“*October 15, 1855.*”

“Once more old ‘Pemb. Coll.’ heads my letter, and once more must I become an autobiographer. I wish you could see my new rooms, as I think you would like them very much. They are in the new Quad, and not very far from the Hall, but very high up on the fourth floor, and sixty stairs to be ascended and descended, no fear of want of exercise. They have a pleasant view (over the tops of houses) into the country beyond, with its trees and fields and hills, and the sun shines brightly in most of the day. The furniture is quite good enough for me, or at least will be as soon as I have had a few alterations made, and the walls look very well with some pictures I have brought from home. Yesterday I had Nichol to breakfast with me in honour of some fowls aunt had had slaughtered expressly for me, and Price took a cup of tea with me and tried some of my home jam. Later on I went to call on a Freshman, remembering my loneliness when I first came up, and very well pleased he appeared to see me, as he knew no one.”

TO HIS FATHER.

“PEMBROKE COLLEGE,
“October 21, 1855.

“I am enjoying my lectures, as they are of a very different nature from those I had last term; no badgering about irregularities, but some inquiry into the sense of the words. I have three lectures a week on the *De Corona*, three on Thucydides, two on St. Mark, one on St. Matthew, one on St. James, three on Logic, and the *Spectator* paper. If any schoolboys complain to you that they have not enough liberty, you may tell them that here no one is allowed to leave the College till eight o'clock in the morning; for I find on inquiry that this absurd law is in force. It was all to no purpose that I asked Mr. Henney if I might be allowed to take a walk every morning, the good man gazed at me as if I were a Chartist or red republican—one fit to pull down a dynasty or overthrow a constitution. Oxford was in danger, a breach was being made in her walls, and he, Mr. Henney, vice-regent of Pembroke College, must throw himself in the path of the assailant; though ‘throw himself’ is rather metaphorical as applied to our fat friend, as the most that could be said in strict truth would be ‘roll’ or ‘waddle.’

“I am sorry to say that I must ask for more money, for besides last term’s battels I have had to buy my furniture. This has been very cheap, considering how comfortable it is, only £15. In fact, there are hardly any rooms in Pembroke where so little would be paid. Nichol gave £70 for his. I have also had to pay more than £3 in procuring new covers to the sofa and chairs, and also all my crockery, teapot, pails, and everything

of that description. And so I think I cannot do with less than £20 more. This, however, will amply suffice for the term, and you must consider that as I shall take good care of the furniture, I may receive £11 or £12 back."

TO MISS SCOTT.

"PEMBROKE COLLEGE,
"October 28, 1855.

"You will be greatly grieved to hear that one of the Freshmen, named Johns, was drowned on Saturday. I do not remember if I mentioned his name to you, but I think I told you that out of the three I called on there was one that I more especially liked. He was the poor fellow whose body now lies in our Chapel. He was a nice, quiet little fellow, and once or twice talked to me about his loneliness in the evenings and how happy he should be to go home again; and then we began talking of the way some people speak of their parents and the fear they have of mentioning their relatives, when he talked of his father and mother in such a way as showed me that they must have been very dear to him—but he is dead now, and in his dear Cornwall, with its rugged shores and lofty hills that he loved so well, there is a house of mourning, a sad old man and a mother weeping for her child, and will not be comforted because he is not."

On November 4th, 1855, Birkbeck Hill wrote to Miss Scott that he had become acquainted with a Pembroke man, Charles Faulkner by name, who though much his senior, "for he is just on the point of taking his second First Class," yet seemed likely to become "a great friend." This expectation proved

true. A close friendship was formed at College, which survived many divergences of opinion in later years, and lasted as long as life itself. Faulkner was at all times a frequent visitor in his friend's home, welcome to all alike. "He was and is a good friend for a young man," said Birkbeck Hill once to one of his children. "He values a man for what he is worth. Now I have had to cure myself of snobbishness, most of us have, and very few of us succeed. But Faulkner does not so much as know what the feeling is. It would never occur to him to think whether a man were a duke or a chimneysweep. He would think only of the man's own worth." In a little paper written some time after his election to an Honorary Fellowship at his old College, in 1892, Birkbeck Hill gives the following account of his first introduction to a small set of men with whom he was for a few years very intimate, and whose influence on him was lasting :—

"In my undergraduate days at Oxford I was introduced to the small knot of men, of whom Burne-Jones and Morris have since become by far the most conspicuous, by William Fulford, the editor of the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*. He had taken his Bachelor's degree before I matriculated, but to my great good fortune he stayed on in residence. I made his acquaintance in the College Hall. At Pembroke we dined in messes, eight or nine at a table. Whenever there was a vacancy it was filled up by the choice of the messmates—if I may use the term—from among the Freshmen. To Fulford's table, I believe at his instigation, though I did not know him, I was invited. There I met Charles Faulkner, afterwards Fellow and Mathematical Tutor of University College, and the third member in the famous art firm of Morris,

Marshall, Faulkner, & Co. He was a man of a singularly noble character, the most truthful man I have ever known. Junior to him were Richard Watson Dixon and Edwin Hatch, afterwards Bampton Lecturer and Reader in Ecclesiastical History. I have described in a little book I published a few years ago, under the title of *Writers and Readers*, how Fulford took me in hand, and did what he could to remedy the failings of an education that had been in excess on the Utilitarian side. I used to accompany him every evening to the room where the set assembled after dinner. At that time they generally met in Hatch's sitting-room on the ground floor of the old house at the north-eastern corner of the narrow passage that leads from Pembroke Street to the College. Sometimes we met in other men's rooms. The host provided nothing but tea for the most part, though now and then a plate of hot buttered toast was added.

"I still recall the wonder with which I watched Dixon as he sat in an arm-chair by the fire smoking a long 'churchwarden.' His complexion was unusually dark, and his hair was black. 'Black Dixon' was the name he often went by among those who did not know him. From time to time he would join in the conversation in a deep, slow voice, in striking contrast with Morris's quick, eager tones. I looked upon him as an oracle of wisdom. He was always known as 'Dickadees,' as Morris was 'Topsy' or 'Top,' and Jones was 'Ned.' He was very poor, living, I believe, on one hundred pounds a year. He was not able to subscribe to the Boat Club, and was therefore by no means popular. Yet I remember being told that when a collection was made in the College during the Crimean War for the Florence Nightingale Fund for the relief of the sufferers, his subscription was largest of all. To

very few men indeed was he known, but those who knew him well loved him for his great simplicity of character. He was 'an Israelite indeed in whom was no guile.' One evening he told us how he had several times tried to blossom forth as a 'swell,' but had always failed. If he had a new suit of clothes and a new hat, his shoes were sure to be as much worn as were Johnson's when they provoked the scorn of the Christchurch men. If his shoes were new, his hat was old. He had given up the attempt in despair.

"At this time there was a good deal of talk about Brewster's work entitled *More Worlds than One, the Creed of the Philosopher and the Hope of the Christian*. Dixon advanced against it an argument which astonished me then, as it astonishes me now. If there are other worlds inhabited by men, he said, there must in each have been the temptation and the fall of man, to be followed in each case by the sufferings of the Saviour. 'This is too horrible to contemplate,' he added in a low tone.

"I am sorry to say that I cannot recall anything about his poetry. I doubt whether in those days I knew that he was a poet.

"The last time I met him was at the College Gaudy in November of last year. We were both Honorary Fellows of the College, and we sat side by side in the Chapel at the service in commemoration of Founders and Benefactors. Of the old set that met in the ancient house in Pembroke Street there were but two survivors."

In the midst of such a circle Birkbeck Hill found yet something different from that which Nichol and his set could give him, perhaps something even more needed by a lad brought up in Utilitarian doctrines.

Life was always keen in Hill's home at Bruce

Castle ; literature, if somewhat restricted in range, was not the less ardently loved by his father. But the romantic side of art and literature had been hitherto unknown to him, and it was there in the old room in Pembroke Street that he learned his ignorance. Something maybe he taught as well as learnt, but at any rate eager evening talks took the place of solitary rambles in the dark ; pipes and tobacco, regarded not so much as a weakness as a veritable sin in his own home, were cheerfully permitted in his rooms, though he did not himself learn to smoke until many years later ; and even an avowed enjoyment of good cheer seems to have entered into his soul together with the charms of the *Morte d'Arthur* and the Pre-Raphaelite conception of Art.

Metaphysics, however, were then, as always, a subject wholly alien to his character. Only in later years his own wider knowledge taught him to respect learning with which he could not sympathise and which perhaps he could not fully understand. During his second residence in Oxford his old opponent, Dr. Hatch, met with juster appreciation ; but he always stuck to it that in undergraduate days at least "there was a deal of moonshine talked."

Let the opinion of a very young man stay for what it is worth, more especially as it was provoked by a corresponding vigour of criticism.

TO MISS SCOTT.

"PEMBROKE COLLEGE,

"November 25, 1855.

"Really it is very pleasant to have always some pleasant company after dinner, the time I used most

of all to dread before I knew many men ; for to come from the bright Hall into the cold Quad and then mount up to one's lonely rooms was miserable enough. But now we usually assemble every evening in one room or the other, and pass a very pleasant two hours or more. Hanging on to the outskirts of my set of men there is a pompous, empty-headed fellow who has an inordinate opinion of himself, which no one in the least shares. This worthy's name is Hatch, and he is famous for saying and writing things which no one can make head or tail of. For instance, in giving a description of heaven as he expected it would be, he said he thought it was a 'sheer void of light,' or a 'void of sheer light,' I am not sure which. Well, this worthy has thought fit to form and promulgate to the others of our clique his opinion of me, though by the bye we have hardly ever met, and never talked together. This, of course, soon reached my ears, and I think you will be rather surprised to hear that I am 'the personification of all the intellectual vices of the age.'"

"PEMBROKE COLLEGE,

"December 3, 1855.

"What do you think of the following piece of Biblical lore which was elicited lately (according to report) in the Divinity School ?

"Q. Do you remember any of the circumstances that attended the ascension of Elijah to heaven ?

"A. Oh yes. Two she bears came out of the wood.

"Q. Well, what next ?

"A. Why, they said, 'Go up, thou bald head. Go up, thou bald head.'

"Q. Well?

"A. And so he went up.

I don't think, though I know next to nothing as yet as to Divinity, that I could ever equal that.

"So that you may give the greater credit to Mr. Hatch's opinion of me, I will give you the subject of one of his last conversations. What should you think if anyone asked you what you thought of 'the watch-tower of the entities'? but that wonderful structure, whether physical or mental I know not, is at present occupying his brain."

"PEMBROKE COLLEGE,

"December 10, 1855.

"To-morrow I shall be out of reach of Dons, lectures, chapels, smoke, etc. etc., and once more at the dear old place. To-day are Collections or college examinations; almost a farce. If a man is idle he copies his neighbour, or perhaps two join to work together. I have been reading *The Newcomes*, and have reached the tenth number. I hardly ever liked a book so much. I have also been reading Tennyson rather carefully, and have found great beauties in him, which some day we will enjoy together."

"December 15.

"I have finished *The Newcomes*. I have hardly ever been more stirred up by a book in my life, and I lay long awake thinking on it, for it teaches a deep

and noble lesson to him who will read it aright. How glorious Thackeray is about *mariages de convenance* !”

“BRUCE CASTLE,

“January 7, 1856.

“This year I am going to have an allowance for my University expenses. I fixed the amount myself at £120, for which most of my friends say they manage to do it. This with my allowance (for clothes) will make £148 at my disposal, so you see I shall have a good lesson in the management of money. I must try to cut down all luxuries so that I may buy books, for I must have a good library.”

TO HIS FATHER.

“PEMBROKE COLLEGE,

“February 17, 1856.

“You will like to hear an account a friend of mine, Dixon, gave me of his first introduction to the Birmingham Grammar School, when the Bishop of Manchester was Headmaster. He is the son of a Methodist clergyman, and never went to school till he was fifteen. At that time he knew nothing whatever of arithmetic, could only make great botches for writing, and knew not a word of Latin or Greek. He had read, however, more English books than almost any boy in the whole school. He was put in the lowest class among the little boys, and the first thing they gave him to learn was the ‘*Propria quae maribus*’ without a translation, or any explanation as to its

meaning. He did his best, and at the end of an hour was called up to say six lines or so, but could not say a word. For this he was caned, and told to bring up ten lines the next morning. He took the book home, worked at it all the evening, learning while undressing and dressing and on his way back to school; but when called up could not do any better than before. For this he was taken to Prince Lee, who caned him and publicly degraded him to the bottom of the school, and there he stuck for some time, being flogged every day, till he did not care any more about it. One day he had written his exercise with rather more blots than usual, and the writing-master told him to show it to the Headmaster. Dixon marched up with a perfectly cheerful air, caring nothing about the punishment expected, and said with a happy tone, 'Mr. — has told me to show you my copy-book.' The Bishop, judging from his tone that he must have done well, opened the book, and turning back to the previous exercises happened to light on one even more blotted. 'Well,' said he, 'I am glad to see there is *some* improvement at last,' and sent Dixon back to his place in triumph. The writing-master, noticing his pleased air, asked him what the Headmaster had told him. Dixon answered that he had said 'he was glad to see there was *some* improvement.' At this the master charged him with having prevaricated, but never sent him to the Bishop again. Dixon afterwards began to rise in the school, and in a very short time was in the First Class, and, without very much work, he took a Second Class in Moderations. I asked him how much of his time he had spent at Latin and Greek verses at that school, and he answered the best part of two years. If Lee was a reformer, what must others be!"

Towards the end of the Lent term of 1856 Birkbeck Hill fell ill with what in all probability was a severe attack of typhoid fever. But in those days, when fevers were but little understood, it was supposed to be a brain attack, and the belief was encouraged by the long period of lassitude and the tendency to acute headache left behind by the disease.

So soon as his relations learnt of his illness he was removed from College and taken to the house of an aunt at Wrexham, where he was nursed with the greatest kindness, and where Miss Scott joined him during his convalescence. This illness modified his college career, and obliged him most reluctantly to give up all hope of high honours in his Final Schools. The immediate result was a time of despondency and even discontent, a mood which indeed never quite left him throughout the rest of his time at Oxford, and which is expressed in the following letter to Miss Scott.

Mr. Swinburne's acquaintance he had doubtless made through Nichol of Balliol.

TO MISS SCOTT.

“PEMBROKE COLLEGE,

“*May* 19, 1856.

“Faulkner went home on Saturday. I have been most miserable without him, particularly as on Sunday the Union is not open. He is going in for a Fellowship, and I am particularly anxious he should obtain it, not only for his sake but also for my own, as if he is not successful I should not be surprised if he were to leave Oxford and go into business. And then what would become of me? As it is, I have very little affection for the place, and should not be at

all sorry if this were my last term. Indeed, I do not know how I shall be able to get through my time unless I am strong enough to read for a class. My present mode of life is all very well for a change, but I am sure I was born for something better. It is only in one respect that my illness seems to have affected my brain, and that is in the memory, and as I should despise a man who because he had lost an arm or a leg therefore claimed for himself exemption from all toil, so too I should be equally worthy of contempt if I should plead one faculty overwrought as an excuse for the idleness of all the others. I do not know if this illness of mine may not be serviceable to me in the end in more ways than one, for I find now that my enjoyment of nature and my power of thinking on any subject are materially increased.

“How pleasant it is to think this is my last week in Oxford! It will be five months that I have been away from home, the longest period of absence in my life. I hope the day of my return will be most fine, and the dear old place will seem to welcome me back with a loving kindness, and smile fondly on her foolish boy.

“Last night I dined at the Observatory, and met a Balliol friend of mine—Swinburne—with his father, Captain Swinburne. There were two other gentlemen there besides our host, Mr. Johnson the astronomer, and as all of them but young Swinburne and myself had been great travellers the conversation was most interesting.

“They had all four been at the Cape of Good Hope, one as a naval captain, the second as an astronomer, the third politically, and the fourth as a Caffre missionary. No. 3 is going to take soundings across

the Atlantic Ocean for the telegraphic wire, and will very likely have the laying of it. Mr. Johnson has a fine collection of illuminated manuscripts, some very early ones. I only wish I could afford to buy such things, as the landscapes in them are most beautiful—but I must wait till I am a rich man.”

“PEMBROKE COLLEGE,

“June 2, 1856.

“Have you read *Maud* yet? I have it at present always with me, either in my hand or pocket or by me at night. You must not attend to all the childish and ignorant criticisms you will hear about it, they are not worth a single straw. We must read it together and read it with reverence—not, when a great poet confers so noble a gift, looking for something to scoff at and turn into ridicule, seeking for an opportunity to say something smart, and considering everything without meaning which we cannot understand.

“You will be pleased to hear that I had the good fortune to save a man of our College from drowning. We had gone to bathe together; I dived in first, and then waited by the bank to see him. He overrated his powers, I suppose, for no sooner did he come up to the surface after diving than I perceived that he was swimming very weakly, so I immediately followed him, and was in time to seize hold of his hair as he was sinking, and so bore him to the opposite bank. We took him back in a boat. It was a lucky thing that he never lost his presence of mind, else we might both have been in danger.”

"PEMBROKE COLLEGE,
" *June* 1856.

"To-morrow morning I breakfast with Nichol, and about the time you are reading my stupid letter I shall be with one of the cleverest sets in Oxford."

"BRUCE CASTLE,
" *July* 28, 1856.

"Faulkner came on Saturday. I have enjoyed his visit very much. We have just come back from a bathe in the river, so you must excuse any incoherence in my writing, for I have been diving head first so vigorously that my brains are quite confused. Three of us dived from different quarters, and meeting in the middle of the river shook hands all round; but I had soon to come up, for I was so much amused by the absurdity of this submarine salutation that I burst out laughing, and of course lost all the air that I had taken down with me. I told Faulkner of our own engagement, and learnt that Jones is engaged to one of Macdonald's sisters, and — is engaged too, so out of our small set three are already on the road to being happy men."

The following letter to Miss Scott is the first hint that Birkbeck Hill would, if left to himself, have chosen some other career than that of continuing the school created by his family. To Arthur Hill it was not conceivable that a finer career existed, nor one more likely to prove beneficial to the world, but his very forbearance in urging his wishes on his son acted

as a powerful inducement to Birkbeck Hill to carry out the plans for the furtherance of which he had undoubtedly been sent to Oxford.

TO MISS SCOTT.

“WREXHAM, *July* 18, 1856.

“I have decided to return to Oxford, but shall not try for honours in Classics, I think, though I may in Natural Science or Law or Modern History. My father asked me yesterday if I liked as well as ever the prospect of taking his place; of course I had to tell him I did not, though at the same time I said that since my illness I did not think I had been nearly so contented as before, and so perhaps this dislike might be only transient. We then talked about the Law, and he ended by saying there was no need to decide just yet, as it would do in a year. It is much easier when away from him to form all sorts of ambitious designs, but when with him it is very different.”

“OXFORD, *October* 20, 1856.

“I am reading Ruskin’s *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*, which I enjoy excessively, and which have already greatly increased my powers of enjoying the beautiful. I wish you would read them. In reading the works of such an enthusiast as Ruskin you must not be disgusted if you meet with anything a little extravagant, but be thankful for the immeasurableness of the beautiful that his works contain. I have already formed many new plans about the school, suggested by

him, and intend to try and cultivate a more loving appreciation of the beautiful among the boys, for of all feelings this is one of the most purifying. For mind you if I do come into the school at all, I shall not be content with what is, but shall always be striving and trying for something higher."

TO HIS FATHER.

"PEMBROKE COLLEGE,

"November 9, 1856.

"My fencing-master says my body is in excellent condition and that he has noticed great improvement in my health. In fact, so strong am I that for the hour and a half that I spend in the gymnasium I hardly need any rest, and come away but little fatigued. For a second time I received the highly gratifying compliment that I should make a very good prize fighter; so if in your usual perusal of *Bell's Life* you meet with a fight between the Pembroke Pet and the Game Chicken, in which the latter after the 670th round 'comes up to the scratch very groggy' (Shakespeare), while the Pet looks as fresh as ever, you may recognise your hopeful second son."

"THE UNION, OXFORD,

"November 27, 1856.

"I am safe through Moderations, having received my *testamur* this afternoon, and come off pretty well. I heard an amusing rhyme made by a private tutor, who teaches the Bible by verses to those

who can learn no other way. This particular rhyme shows who were the only two Israelites who of the whole number that left Egypt reached the land of promise.

‘Joshua the son of Nun,
And Caleb the son of Jephunneh,
Were the only two
Who ever got through
To the land of milk and honey.’

Can you guess what Swig, Pig, and Fig signify? The first denotes the first miracle wrought, viz. the changing water into wine—swig; and the two last stand for the only two destructive miracles, viz. the driving the swine into the sea and the withering of the fig-tree.”

TO MISS SCOTT.

“BRUCE CASTLE,
“*January* 19, 1857.

“Well, I shall be at Oxford soon, though you must not think I am impatient to be in that old hole, for I often feel heartily sick of it, and am impatient to begin real work. I am like a man who has been sharpening his tool for ever so long at the grindstone and is quite eager to see how it will cut. But the great grindstone of all must turn once and a half round still before my time comes. What a grumbling world this is! Here am I with so much to make me happy and yet I grumble. I do verily believe that if I were taken up and set slap down in the midst of Heaven, aye in the Seventh Heaven, past the Lotus Tree, that I should even there complain of the accommodation. But I shall be more contented when I am doing something,

for I often feel that in me which tells me I can play a good part in this world's fight ; but here I am at the 21st milestone on the great highway and not a foot-print have I left behind, and this mile too seems as if it would be as barren as the rest. When I have not you with me I sadly miss someone who understands me and enters into my wishes and thoughts. But at home there is no one who knows what I think about.

"The first evening at home P. comes and talks of his idol the Post Office : he worships a god in a red coat, and his talk is of his praise without ceasing. When that service is over, service No. 2 begins. Here we must all fall down and worship before the great goddess Currency and listen to her praise, interesting enough to those who understand her language and care for the goddess, but dull, alas, for the poor wayfarer. To-day Mr. G. has turned up, and he has begun his service also, and the beautiful goddess Cold Water and the devil Alcohol have their turn ; and this finished, O. begins with his service, and Facts, weary Facts, keep the stage. I am under the cold shadow of Utilitarianism, and am so surfeited with the Useful that I am beginning to hate it. Facts are a poor drink for a thirsty soul, and though I fear I scoff at what I ought not and am often wanting in reverence, yet you must not think that I have no reverence, no faith. My belief in truth, in goodness, in God, is firm and not to be shaken, but it cannot be fed with facts, it will not satisfy itself with currency, or prison discipline, or penny postage, or plans of education. These are but means co-operant to an end, and to that end I would try to raise myself."

What could this world of facts make of the Lotus

Tree beyond the Seventh Heaven? Pre-Raphaelitism and Old Mortality Club had indeed carried Birkbeck Hill a long way from the interests still absorbing his family circle in the old home. However, a Benthamite Radical at heart he still was, like his forbears, as the following letter shows :—

TO HIS FATHER.

“OXFORD, *February* 15, 1857.

“Last night there was a debate at the Union on the Laws about criminals, in which I joined, but with very poor success. Though it was not altogether my fault, for a good many men seemed to have come for the express purpose of ridiculing everything and everyone, and the man who rose before I did was laughed down owing to some unfortunate gesture. Then, too, I think I spoke too strongly on the subject, as of course from knowing more about juvenile offenders than most who were there, my feelings were stronger. Be that as it may, as soon as the ‘chaffing’ began, I, to a great extent, lost my self-possession and did not regain it. I find it very much more difficult speaking with the meeting altogether against you than when they are friendly disposed, for in the one case they seize on every little slip and turn it to ridicule, in the other they show indulgence. It is very provoking to have failed so completely, especially as it was a very full house, nearly two hundred present, but as it was in a good cause I must try not to care. Still, I am not a Diogenes, nor have I a tub into which I can retire to avoid the ridicule of the world. I hope poor — has so far recovered as to be able to relieve you. Before many half-years have passed some of this extra

work will not fall on you, for my shoulders will be between."

Hill's second attempt at speaking succeeded better. He notes on it, "In the course of my speech I happened to call Disraeli a 'notorious impostor' and a 'quack,' and though I was somewhat hissed I was much more applauded." Time modified many of his opinions, but not that on Disraeli.

TO HIS FATHER.

"OXFORD, *February* 24, 1857.

"I am attending at present a course of lectures by Jowett, the Greek Professor, on Plato. They are by far the best I have ever heard on any subject, and draw a great many men. He himself is, I should think, by far the first man in Oxford, at all events there is no one, I am told, who has so much influence on the men who come more immediately under his notice. Where we crack jokes on our tutors men speak with reverence of Jowett. His face is very striking. Besides being stamped with great ability there is still more strongly written down the thoroughly good and amiable man. At the first lecture I was so fascinated with his expression that I found that when I ought to have been taking notes I was gazing instead at him."

TO MISS SCOTT.

"OXFORD, *March* 4, 1857.

"Yesterday I was in Swinburne's rooms. I wish you knew the little fellow; he is the most enthusiastic fellow I ever met, and one of the cleverest. He wanted

to read me some poems he had written and have my opinion. They are really very good, and he read them with such an earnestness, so truly feeling everything he had written, that I for the first time in my life enjoyed hearing the poetry of an amateur. He was very much pleased at the honest praise I could bestow on them. Then I read him my article on *Maud*, and whether out of a feeling of gratitude for my praise of him, or that he really liked it, he said he thought it very good. I thought afterwards that it might have raised a smile if anyone had been present to hear our alternations of praise, but luckily there was no one present."

" OXFORD, *March* 18, 1857.

"I am reading *Aurora Leigh*, which Swinburne lent me. It is surpassingly beautiful and noble, and pleases me not so very much less than *Maud*, which is indeed great praise. I am sure you, and every true woman, will like it, for of all books that I have read written by women it is the most worthy of them."

" BRUCE CASTLE,

" *March* 27, 1857.

"I feel but in a melancholy mood to begin a letter to you, for I have just been reading of poor Guy's death in *The Heir of Redclyffe*. I forget if you have ever read the book; if not, I shall like some time to read it together with you—it is so beautiful and so good. How glorious would such a deathbed be as Guy's, and how glorious for the survivor to be such as Amy!"

“ OXFORD, *March 30, 1857.*

“ I wish you could have heard Arthur Stanley’s three introductory lectures on Ecclesiastical History. He has just been appointed Regius Professor, much I should think to the horror of some of the Thirty-Nine pounders here. He began by a quotation from *Pilgrim’s Progress*, and ended by a quotation from *Pilgrim’s Progress*. He lamented the narrowness to which the word ‘ecclesiastical’ had been contracted, and said that he would not so confine it. That he did not mean by Ecclesiastical History that History which while it tells of miserable disputes about postures and vestments has nothing to say about the great question of the Slave Trade ; which while it gives you the life of some miserable bishop or wicked pope tells you nothing of some noble philosopher or some great Christian king.

“ These were almost his exact words. He exhorted everyone—and everyone there included the Vice-Chancellor, Heads of Houses, Professors, Fellows, Tutors, and what not—to study the Life of Baxter, as being most worthy of being read. In talking of the narrow distinctions laid down by sects, he said they may avail with ordinary people, but how are they trampled through by a heathen like Socrates, by a Nonconformist like Howard, by a Quaker like Elizabeth Fry.

“ Maclaren, the fencing-master, says I am in excellent condition. His measurements show that this term I have increased half an inch round the chest and a whole inch round the arm. I think on the whole I have liked this term as well as any, if not better, and find Oxford improve on acquaintance. Indeed, I see now so much better than before what are Oxford’s real merits and what it does. Then, too, my work is changed so much.

Instead of merely grubbing away at words, I am at the thoughts ; instead of reading commentators, I am at the authors themselves ; instead of reading the description of the path in the itinerary, I am looking at the path with my own eyes. Instead of Priscian, I have Plato."

These last few letters show how deep a hold the romantic side of literature had taken on Birkbeck Hill since his friendship with Faulkner and his set. Undoubtedly he owed to their influence his admiration for Arthur Stanley, Mrs. Browning, and Miss Yonge. His "Old Mortality" friends, on the other hand, probably jeered at him, especially in the matter of *The Heir of Redclyffe*.

"What Hill found to admire so in that book we never could make out," said one of them not long ago. And indeed Hill himself, some thirty years later, admitted, with a sigh for an old love, that he could not now read the book. It once had, nevertheless, his honest admiration, and the admiration of a fresh and eager mind argues much for the merit of a writer. Happily his aspirations after an early death and a long widowhood for Miss Scott were not fulfilled. He and his wife lived to keep their forty-third wedding-day together.

CHAPTER IV

Fame as a pugilist—Meeting with Rossetti—*Undergraduate Papers*—Swinburne's *Queen Yseult*—Story of Arthur Stanley—Skittles and cider—Rage with the Dean for "crossing" him—Reading for Honours abandoned—An Honorary Fourth—Farewell to Oxford.

TO HIS FATHER.

"PEMBROKE COLLEGE,

"*Sunday, April 26, 1857.*

"Oxford usage is a little peculiar on the Sunday. To-day a man has just called on me for my subscription to the Boat Club, and Pembroke, too, is the eminently Protestant Low Church College. Yesterday on leaving town I by bad luck entered a carriage where there was a young fellow who told me that he had been to Gordon Cumming's Exhibition, and gave me wonderful accounts of shooting elephants and killing snakes, mixed up with digressions on his grandfather, uncles, the number of rabbits he had shot, etc. From him I only found relief by the entrance of a fat farmer, with whom I instantly plunged into a conversation on deep draining and two-feet drains, myself inclining if the soil were heavy to 3 feet or 2 feet 11 inches, while he advocated 2 feet 6 inches. On this subject, as of course I know nothing, I displayed a vast amount of information and learning, and as luckily we were not more than ten minutes together, talked so learnedly for that short space that, to judge from the respect

with which the man of oxen treated me, he must have thought me a genius. If the train had not stopped then, I should have gone on to shorthorns and Fisher Hobbs, stopping parenthetically to discuss guano."

TO MISS SCOTT.

"PEMBROKE COLLEGE,
"May 3, 1857.

"I have been reading *Yeast* this Sunday morning, and feel all the better man for it, as I always do when I read Kingsley. But he makes me sad, too, to think how much there is to do and how little one can do, and how much less one does do. One-and-twenty years of one's life ought to show some fruit, something done to make the world better, something done to relieve the great sufferings, to do away with the terrible injustices, to bring classes more into one great whole, to help somewhat to bring about our grand prayer, 'Thy Kingdom come'! But it is easy to write all this and hard to do anything, and now I have my Oxford work pressing on me. It is my duty to do that now to the uttermost of my power, but I may remember that I am but girding myself up, that this is not the race I have to run, but only the training for that race.

"To-morrow I believe the Old Mortality intends to take a picnic up the river and make merry. We shall go to Godstow and dream of Fair Rosamond there, I suppose, and the old days of the nunnery."

“PEMBROKE COLLEGE,

“*May 24, 1857.*

“Swinburne has just left me. All day I have been very much engaged breakfasting, lunching, dining out, and having Swinburne to tea. . . . I really must begin to try and drop an acquaintance or two. I am determined not to form any new ones, for I have so many engagements. Still, I am not idle, but getting through my work pretty well. Do you know my name in the Old Mortality? My pugilistic tendencies have got out, and so I am always addressed as ‘the Pembroke Bantam,’ or as ‘the Bantam’ alone. Yesterday there was a Cantab present, and Swinburne and some others gave him such an extraordinary description of my love of boxing, as for instance that I was editing a book called *Fistiana*, that I had to make an indignant protest, and much to my amusement found that the Cantab was really believing most of the stories.”

“BRUCE CASTLE,

“*July 2, 1857.*

“The weather has been very wet, but I have been reading the Life of Charlotte Brontë all day. I hope you have read it. It is one of the best biographies of one of the noblest of women. I hope the people who attacked *Jane Eyre* will be silenced for ever. On looking at dates I find I must have been a day or two in Ambleside while Miss Brontë was staying there with Miss Martineau. I do so wish I had seen her.”

“BRUCE CASTLE,

“*July 6, 1857.*

“I went to see a Pre-Raphaelite Exhibition for which a ticket had been given me. There were some very fine pictures indeed, among others the one of Chingford Church which those miserable Academicians would not admit. Returning home, I called on [Burne] Jones and Morris, and stayed to dine with them, meeting Rossetti, to my great delight. He was very quiet, and said little. They tell me that the lady he is engaged to is in a consumption, which explained his quietness. How do you like the [illustrated] Tennyson? I am sure you were very much struck with the Godiva. It is the best of Hunt's, I think. Of Rossetti's I think I liked best the last picture in *The Lady of Shalott*, the figures stooping over the boat are so very fine, but then on the other hand Sir Galahad is such a glorious head that I can hardly decide between them.”

TO HIS FATHER.

“PEMBROKE COLLEGE,

“*November 1, 1857.*

“The Pre-Raphaelite artists are still working away busily at the Union. I wonder what other set of artists would work so hard for nothing, except fair fame and love of art. Munro tells me that if Rossetti had given all the time to small pictures that he has to his large one here, he would have made a thousand guineas, and I believe he is going to paint two others. I think his picture almost the most beautiful I have ever seen. Perhaps it may partly be that I can see it so often and learn it off so well, as I am very often

there. I find it hard to get away, as his picture almost fascinates me."

The following letters speak of an author's first joy. Birkbeck Hill had indeed already seen his words in print in his school magazine, but the new venture was very different. Money was to be paid, and the contributors all felt they were certain, as indeed proved the truth, to make their mark on the literature of their country. All indeed except Luke. This is the only mention to be found of Luke in all those portions of letters kept by Mrs. Birkbeck Hill, and yet his early and tragic death left a profound gap in Birkbeck Hill's life.

TO MISS SCOTT.

" PEMBROKE COLLEGE,
" November 10, 1857.

"I thought this would be a very pleasant letter indeed, but I am disappointed. How so: you must learn, and the story is a long one. Three numbers of a magazine have lately come out here, very bad indeed, and of course the publisher has lost by them. So he is proposing to change it altogether, and has offered Nichol the management of it. He has accepted it on condition of all of us of the Old Mortality joining him. So you see we are going to have a paper to ourselves. We shall give it quite a new name, so that it may not seem to be connected with the last; it will be called *Undergraduate Papers*. I have written for them my little fairy story, and it is very much liked—in fact, I have been praised as I never was before. Now how am I disappointed in all this? Why, it

concerns you, my dearest. When it was mentioned to me first, I understood that the publisher was to pay us five shillings a page, and as the story is about five pages long, why there is a nice little sum at once. Now do you not remember, lassie, that once I said that the first money I ever gained by writing was to be spent on a present for you? So thinking of this I had been so happy and had written so much better, and now after all I find that I was mistaken and that this arrangement will not begin till next number, which will not come out till next year. So I must wait a long time. I felt very sad about it, for it was a great disappointment. I ought to have sent you my article, but the fact is it was all done in a hurry. I saw Nichol on Saturday night, and he asked me to do it directly. So I began about eleven that evening, and finished it under two hours. It is I think by far the best thing I have written, but I shall not know what to think of it till I have your judgment. Please not to mention Nichol's name to anyone, as he does not wish it to be known. This will not take up much of my time, as you see I was not two hours at my story. I shall write some essays, very likely on ancient history. Swinburne is writing a ballad on Queen Yseult from the *Morte d'Arthur*. I heard part of it this evening. He is already a true poet, I say it without exaggeration—but of all this you must judge for yourself. I hope you will like the plan. None of us can lose any money by it, as the publisher takes all the risk, but, on the contrary, five shillings a page will be very pleasant. Tell Laura she must subscribe for it—it will come out in weekly parts, fourpence each. Everything must be done to keep it up and ensure my supply of five shillings.

“I am very glad to find on consulting Bradshaw

that I shall have some chance of getting to Wigan the same day that I leave Oxford. If I can only get leave from the tutors to leave 'Collections' a few minutes earlier, I shall be able to catch the one-o'clock train, and then I shall be able to reach Wigan at about ten o'clock, having to stay about two hours in Birmingham. So now there are not five weeks left. We often have mince pies in Hall, and I always make it a matter of principle to eat them, not of course that I like them, but it makes it seem Christmas-like. What a glorious time it will be—not a fortnight as last winter, but a good long five weeks."

"PEMBROKE COLLEGE,

"*November 13, 1857.*

"The Magazine will come out on December 1st, so you must not expect it for more than a fortnight. As you rightly guess, you come into my story; you are the Princess and I am the Prince. I wrote it off as I have sometimes written a letter to you. The words came out almost faster than my pen could move, and I had no heart afterwards to correct it much, even if I had had time."

"PEMBROKE COLLEGE,

"*December 1, 1857.*

"You will receive at the same time as this letter the first number of *the Review*. I hope you will like it, and my story not least of all. I have not myself had time to read all the articles, so I cannot pronounce on their merits as yet. Luke wrote the first on Heredi-

tary Influence. Of that on Christianity I do not know the author. Nichol wrote the 'Temple of Janus,' and Swinburne the 'Early Dramatists,' 'Queen Yseult,' and 'Modern Hellenism.' This last you will not understand without knowing that it is an attack on a lecture just delivered by our Professor of Poetry, Matthew Arnold. There is one point you might miss: those three or four words in quotation marks close to the end of the article are from one of Arnold's poems. The Magazine ought to have come out last night, and we were a good deal disappointed that it was late; for Swinburne had invited all the contributors to his room, except Nichol, who had gone down, to welcome in the little stranger. Though we had not the satisfaction of having the paper itself, we still managed to drink its health in very good claret, as well as the health of each contributor, and the absent editor also. So we made very merry indeed, and though the baby was not there, still the christening was very successful."

"PEMBROKE COLLEGE,
"December 3, 1857.

"Now I intend to become very conceited and admire my little story very much, for if I have written anything which you admire so well, I ought to be proud indeed. I intend to tell Swinburne what you think of his poem, it will please him so very much, for I had told him I intended to read it to you myself, much to his delight. You admire in it also the very points he thinks the best. The misprints are shocking, and we must try better next time. The publisher is, I fear, a very poor man of business, and I cannot but have great doubts that he will make it pay."

“PEMBROKE COLLEGE,

“*March* 14, 1858.

“I heard an amusing story the other day that a friend of mine heard Arthur Stanley tell. He, Stanley, had been travelling in Hungary, and there one day fell into conversation with a boy, Latin being their common tongue (for it seems that the Hungarians talk Latin). I suppose Stanley was not very quick at talking, for the boy asked him what he did in England. Stanley told him he taught Latin, whereupon the lad answered, ‘*Minimos credo.*’ The more I understand Aristotle’s *Ethics* the greater is my admiration for him. His work if published now would on the whole be far in advance of the age, and I cannot understand how men can get him up with all the care they do and yet not learn the great lessons he teaches; how they can still think that education consists in any amount of cleverness and overlook the greatest of all things—the formation of habit.”

TO HIS SISTER, MRS. SCOTT.

“PEMBROKE COLLEGE,

“*June* 15, 1858.

“You will be looking forward very much to seeing Father and Aunt, but you must mind not to get too much excited about their coming, or else I expect Master Baby will get black in the face, etc. etc. etc. What an awful scene it will be! Do pad Baby; while Ted is away you can have his cricket-pads for it, or else the little thing will be sure to be crushed in all the embraces. Let me imagine the scene. Carriage wheels are heard in the distance, whereat Laura (in a cap, of

course) seizes hold of the baby and rushes on to the verandah in a state of excitement; the carriage draws nearer, Aunt's head is out of the window to catch the first glimpse of the darling pet, and is nearly knocked off by a bough of a tree. Laura in a frenzy waves the 'wee-wee' round her head, while the poor little thing screams violently; the carriage stops, the door is opened; Aunt and Laura meet in an embrace, the baby being between; at the end of ten minutes they separate. Horrors! where is the baby? A search is made, it is nowhere to be found. James is sent for. 'If you please, ma'am, is this it? I thought it was a pancake, but I see now it is Master Arthur.'"

His sister Laura had married Mr. Edward Scott, Annie Scott's father, on April 23rd, 1857.

To Miss Scott.

"PEMBROKE COLLEGE,
"April 1858.

"I have just finished *Robinson Crusoe*, which I have been reading over again. There are two things I have noted as striking in the story: the one is that never once in all his stay in the island is Robinson Crusoe made to regret the absence of woman, never once wishes he had a wife; and again, though such a wonderful idea is given us of the geography of the island, that we know every place as well almost as we know our native village, yet notwithstanding there is no reference through the whole book, I believe, to the beauty of the scenery."

“PEMBROKE COLLEGE,

“ *April 4, 1858.*

“To show you how well I must be, I will report what the other day one of my friends said among a lot of men: ‘I would give anything to be as happy a man as Hill.’ . . . I am working a little with one of my friends named Dicey. We read Aristotle together and help each other: this is good for me, as he knows the book better than I do.”

“PEMBROKE COLLEGE,

“ *May 2, 1858.*

“I am afraid you will be much shocked when I tell you of our amusements yesterday. Three of us, Faulkner, Morris, poet and artist, and myself, rowed down the river three or four miles and stopped at a pretty ivy-covered inn by the side of the river to play skittles, and as the rain came on we were detained so long that we actually played five games and drank two quarts of cider. There now, what will B. say? ‘He actually went out on Saturday afternoon, when all the low people are about, with two low companions, one an artist, who of course was a drunkard, and boozed and played at skittles at a low tavern! Poor Annie! She will have an unhappy life!’”

“PEMBROKE COLLEGE,

“ *May 16, 1858.*

“At present I somewhat resemble a beleaguered city, cut off from supplies of food, and only able to obtain any by forage. I had a friend from town to visit me

on Saturday. As I had a lecture at twelve which I did not want to miss, I thought it better to cut my eleven-o'clock lecture with the Dean in Hall, and spend that hour with my visitor. This seems to have enraged our stupid Dean, who thereupon takes my name off the books for a time without asking me if I had any excuse. This we call 'crossing a man,' and when this happens the usual course is to go to the Dean who crossed you and represent your case, and so get your cross taken off, if you have a fair excuse. But the Dean crossed me just before he went down for a few days, and I had no time to see him, and the consequence of the cross is that I cannot get any food from the kitchen, and so have to live on my friends. This morning luckily I had four invitations for breakfast, and so did very well. The Dean ought not to have acted so even with an irregular or fast man, but with a reading man it is greatly too bad. Of all the Deans he is the one who most neglects his own duties. It will be pleasant to be freed from this petty interference, that is more suited to a dame's school than to a great University. It seems like the old punishment of being sent supperless to bed. . . . To give you a notion how industrious I am, I shall have all sorts of great books open with markers at every page, as I once did with Morris's Poems, which were lying in Faulkner's rooms, when I knew that Morris was to be there soon."

TO HIS FATHER.

"BEECH HILL, WIGAN,

"August 20, 1858.

"I saw Mr. Griffith [the doctor who had attended him through typhoid] again on Monday, and then after

he had examined me he altogether concurred in the suggestion I myself made that I should give up reading for Honours. He said that no doubt I might have strength sufficient to attain a First Class, but that, as is too often the case, I might throw away on one effort the strength intended for a lifetime. He also gave me some very wise and kind advice, and told me that he hoped this step was taken upon deliberation and because I was fully persuaded that it was best, and that therefore I must never look back upon it with idle regret. Now that Mr. Griffith has given his opinion so strongly, I feel more able to say how strongly I feel it to be the wisest course. Though I have such vigorous bodily health and to all appearance look fitter for a campaign than an hospital, yet I do not think my brain is able to bear nearly so great a strain as many another man's is; not but that I hope to be able to do as much work, if not indeed more than most men do; only it must not involve such excitement in it as is necessarily the case with striving after university honours. Unless you think any other course better, I shall at once prepare for a B.A. degree, which will be held in the last week of October. I walked most of the way from Llangollen to Corwen. The next morning I started off before breakfast, but bought a slice of brown bread on the way, on which I had to exist till I came to the next hotel, fifteen miles off. I was soaked through on this walk. I went by coach on to Bettws y Coed. Wednesday proved very fine, so I started for Snowdon, the ascent of which begins eleven or twelve miles from where I slept. On the way I saw the finest waterfall I have ever seen—the Swallow Falls. Before beginning the climb I took some bread-and-butter for lunch, and thus refreshed set to work. I chose the ascent from the Capel Curig side. I

had never seen such a precipice before. Till I reached the top I was almost alone all the time, but when I had at last attained the summit I found people enough. I remember that on first looking round from the top of Helvellyn I thought I had never seen so glorious and at the same time so awe-striking a sight in my life, and the impression has hardly faded away. As I was gaining the top of Snowdon, I said to myself at first, 'This is the most cocknified place I have ever been at.' There were two little hotels, each having a couple of rooms, some tents, and twenty or thirty people who were more intent on the bottled beer than on the view, and seemed to be mostly of that class of people who are to be seen at Greenwich or Richmond. Facetious jokes and chaff were flying about, and the last thing that seemed to be thought about was that they were, or rather that they ought to have been, 'among the eternal silence of the hills.' However, after my first burst of indignation had passed away, I could enjoy the beautiful prospect. The coast of Wales was beautifully marked out by the sea, which was sparkling in the sun, which was now sinking in the west. I could not see Ireland, however, or the Westmorland mountains. When I had been there half an hour or so, thick clouds gathered all around us, and for a time cut off everything from our view, though now and then we had a glimpse of some shining river or lake through a break in the mist. As I was lightly clad, I did not remain, but descended to Llanberis, reaching it at about eight o'clock hungry and tired, for I had been on my feet with but short and few rests for nearly eleven hours."

“BEECH HILL, WIGAN,
“August 27, 1858.

“I was much obliged to you for your kind letter, and glad to find you approved of my step. I am getting on pretty well with my Divinity. To remember the plagues of Egypt more easily as to their names and order, I put them into the following verse. What do you think of it?

Water like blood,
Frogs from the mud,
Lice in their hair,
Flies everywhere,
Cattle diseased,
Blains and boils teased,
Fire and hail,
Locusts assail,
Sunlight all shut off,
First-born all cut off.”

TO MISS SCOTT.

“BRUCE CASTLE,
“November 24, 1858.

“If you will look into the *Times* of this morning, you will see the Oxford Class list, and my name among the Fourths. It is too bad of them not to distinguish between an ordinary Fourth Class and an Honorary one, but they never will.

“. . . I was rather pleased to find that men here have a higher opinion of an Honorary Fourth than I myself had formed, and seem to think it an honour for Pembroke to have had two this term. But Honorary Fourths and all such kind of things may go to Jericho or farther, for now I have only twenty-four days more to wait for my marriage.”

“PEMBROKE COLLEGE,
“*December* 11, 1858.

“Now in an hour or two I shall leave Oxford. Somehow I feel rather sad, now that the actual time has come for leaving the fine old place. How much I have changed in these nearly four years! On the whole I do not at all regret my life passed here, but rather I think it has been of the greatest benefit to me.”

Thirty-two years later Birkbeck Hill wrote: “The other day I had tea in my old rooms in Pembroke, with a young Scotchman, named Duff. I was glad to sit in them again, and to turn my thoughts back to the old days. I am going to give him my *Rasselas*, so that one of my books may be in my old haunts. How much I owe to Oxford! far more than numbers of men who carried off prizes and honours and little else. It is not only for what I carried away, but also for what I left behind, that I am so grateful.”

CHAPTER V

Marriage with Miss Scott—Partner in Bruce Castle School—Letter to John Nichol on Oxford teaching—Foreign tour with Nichol and A. V. Dicey—Torchlight procession at Heidelberg—"Glory of glories," the Danube—Further revolt against family ideals—Move to Bruce Castle—Mrs. Birkbeck Hill—Pre-Raphaelite pictures and papers—Holidays among the mountains—First writings for the *Saturday Review*—Breakdown in health—A winter at Mentone—Walking tour along the Riviera—Decision to retire from the School.

On the 28th December 1858, Birkbeck Hill went down to Wigan with his father to be ready for his wedding on the morrow. On the preceding Christmas Day he had written his last letter to Miss Scott. It is one of the very few which Mrs. Birkbeck Hill did not destroy. A few sentences from a long letter may serve as farewell to the four-years' engagement.

"BRUCE CASTLE,

"*Christmas Day*, 1858.

"This is the last letter I shall ever write before we are married. . . . "I cannot feel very sorry at having come to the last letter of the Passionate Pilgrim, and yet some of the happiest hours of my life have been spent in writing to you. I suppose there is nothing in a lover's letters, at least people say so; but there is a great deal of happiness in saying that nothing. As Thackeray somewhere says, I have been conjugating the old verb *Amo*, *Amas*, *Amat*, 'I love, thou lovest,

she loveth,' and though I have gone over it so often in these last few years and rung so many changes, yet still it seems to me just as fresh as ever, and I come to it eager as a young scholar."

The wedding tour was taken in Yorkshire, visiting abbeys and ruined castles. From Bolton he wrote to his aunt, Miss Maurice, who being much of an invalid had been unable to be present at the marriage ceremony.

" BOLTON BRIDGE, YORKSHIRE,
" *January* 1, 1859.

"I have no doubt you will have received so full an account of the wedding from Beech Hill that there will be nothing left for me to tell. However, I may say that, so far as I can judge, the marriage service is about the quietest and calmest time in one's whole life. I wrote my name in the book in a splendid hand, so very firm and decided, but I fear Annie's signature was a little shaky, and did not contrast very well with mine."

Any hesitation as to the choice of his profession had come to an end long before the wedding. The school was in need of fresh inspiration; Mr. Arthur Hill began to feel the weight of his long years of toil, and Birkbeck Hill himself was willing to accept a career which enabled him to marry without longer delay. He took his young wife home to a small house in the neighbourhood of Bruce Castle, where they lived for the first two years of their married life, and where their first child, Margaret, was born. In 1860 they moved to an ancient and exceedingly picturesque house just outside the Castle walls. Its roof was by no

means water-tight, and some of its windows looked straight on to the grass-grown graves of the old parish churchyard, where sheep peacefully nibbled in those days, and across which the beadle in scarlet coat and awful authority marshalled the charity school children twice every Sunday. It was possibly not a particularly healthy house, but it was a home which they loved, and left with much reluctance. The only letter now existing dated from the Priory is addressed to Mr. Nichol. It was never finished nor sent to its destination, but by some chance remained among a packet of other manuscripts until after the deaths of both the writer and his friend.

TO JOHN NICHOL.

“THE PRIORY, TOTTENHAM,

“*March 29, 1863.*

“It seems as if I had heard very little of you for a long time, and so I am going to try and get a letter out of you. It is my fault, I know, for not keeping up a correspondence with you, but I know not how it is, I am one of the worst letter-writers there ever was. I exhausted myself when a boy, for I was never absent from home then without writing almost every day. Besides, consider my long engagement, which lasted four years and a half, containing 234 weeks. Now just consider, from your own experience, the number of sheets of paper a lover can cover in one week, multiply that by 234, and when you have, by aid of Cocker, got the grand result, own that I have some slight excuse for my great negligence at present. I have lately had a sharp illness, which I owe to that most dreadful bore, the Prince of Wales. For I took a severe cold in seeing the illuminations [for his

wedding]. I never was very loyal, as you know, but since my fortnight's illness I have become a most furious republican, and am ready to support any comprehensive measure for the immediate extermination of all the royal families of the world. However, the sight was very well worth seeing for one who, like myself, had never seen a great show or a great crowd. It seemed to open a new thought to me, and to make me all at once at home with the crowds and citizens of Shakespeare.

"It was not the particular devices over the houses, but it was the strange light thrown over the street, like nothing one had ever seen before; then there were the great flags hung on lines over the streets, which where the houses met close together were to my mind very striking; and beyond all there was that tremendous crowd, for the most part good-humoured enough, but shouting and pushing and cursing and swearing, and joking not in the most modest language about the happy pair, and sweeping you along at its own pleasure, and leaving about as much individual play in you as belongs to the centre bee in a swarm. I should never think of going again to see another sight of such a kind, but still not to have seen it once would be to be ignorant of a very curious part of life.

"In spite of all this, however, I am still as hostile to the Prince of Wales. Are you not most heartily sick of the amount of space taken up in all the newspapers by the Royal Family ever since Prince Albert's death?

"If I were in Parliament I should, I think, bring in an Act to make it felony to say a single word about the Prince Consort and his great virtues. It was all very well at first, but the nation might have

by this time recovered from its amazement at the astonishing discovery that even princes can die.

“To turn to quite a different subject. Last night and to-day, being quite alone, I have been taking up the *Ethics* in the hope of beginning again to study it. A question arose in my mind which I think came to some extent across me when at Oxford as to how far the *Ethics* and, to some extent, the *Republic*, are well taught at Oxford. The *Ethics* may be looked upon, I think, in a twofold point of view, firstly, as a mere training of the intellect, secondly, as a training of the moral part of man through the intellect, if I may say so. We may either look upon it as an exercise somewhat akin to the study of Euclid, by which the intellect is sharpened and strengthened by going through a long and difficult argument, or we may regard it as a means whereby man can be taught to do what is right not from mere habit or precept, but from a clear understanding of the nature of right and of its effects on human happiness.

“Now I think by our Oxford system the latter part is left to take care of itself. It may be that it is sufficient to see that a man clearly understands the nature of the argument, in the belief that he himself will make practical use of what he learns; but I rather doubt this. No doubt the best will do so. They could no more read Aristotle than they could any other great writer without being more than merely intellectually influenced by him; but with the ordinary run I do not think this is the case. I do not believe it enters into the head of one man in five or six that the reading of the *Ethics* could in any way have any effect on him for good or bad. I may be mistaken in this; you have seen so much more than I have of Oxford students that you will know if I am mis-

taken; but judging from my own friends and acquaintances I do not think I am wrong. The question arises, if there is any truth in this, is there any cure for it?

"It would never do to substitute for the high intellectual training of the best tutors mere wordy sermonising, which might be spun out by anyone who could talk."

[*Letter unfinished.*]

Although this letter was never sent it was not because there was any break in the friendship, for in the following June Birkbeck Hill set out on a tour with Mr. Nichol to the Rhineland and Switzerland. Mr. Bryce, Mr. A. V. Dicey, and "another Oxford man" were of the party for at any rate part of the time. How much Hill enjoyed the trip the following letters show, though anxiety for his wife's health, who was not at the time very strong, made him hasten home before his companions. They seem to have started about June 20th. On July 3rd he writes: "I am getting homesick and full of pity for you. Nichol and Dicey abuse me so for leaving. In fact, I think Nichol is offended with me."

TO MRS. BIRKBECK HILL.

"BINGEN ON THE RHINE,

"June 25, 1863.

"We left Coblentz yesterday by steamboat, and came up the Rhine to this place through most beautiful scenery. We saw fireflies at Coblentz, and very beautiful they were. We took a boat and rowed

down the Rhine to an old castle of curiosities. And do you know I saw dear old Goetz's iron hand, the very iron hand that he wore. I did touch it, and I would have kissed it had I been alone. I never saw an ancient thing that moved me more. There was a most terrible helmet worn by one of the judges of the secret court. It made one shudder to look at it. The poor wretch on his trial could have seen nothing but the eyes and mouth of his judge, and a helmet so fashioned as to have a look of no mercy. Moreover, there was the armour of a trooper. So you may imagine what a commentary there was on Goetz von Berlichingen, what with the iron hand, the mask of the secret court judge, and a dress that George might have worn. Besides this there were pictures of Holbein, and a glass painting by Albert Durer (so the guide said)—the picture that gave rise to Fouqué's story. There was the knight on horseback going through the valley, and the evil figure by him, and the dog crouching beneath. It was very beautiful. We crossed the Rhine and climbed a most steep hill all through vineyards. I never was in such heat before, I think. However, we had a bottle of most cool wine at the top and some splendid views, which made up for much grief and toil. Let us only succeed a bit, and we will try and stay at some place on the Rhine before long. I shall not be contented till you have seen all this. I wish I could know how the [cricket] match has gone on, but I have seen nothing since Monday's *Times*, which of course had nothing about it."

“HEIDELBERG, *June 27, 1863.*

“We left Bingen by steamboat on Thursday, and went again up the Rhine, through very pretty country, and came at last to Mayence, where we were to see the Cathedral, only unfortunately Nichol got a toothache, and so we had to hurry on to Heidelberg at once. Here we met Bryce and another Oxford man, and a very pleasant time we have had. Yesterday was a day of great novelties. In the evening we went up to the great Castle, which is very interesting, though very disappointing also, as so much of the building is plainly not above two hundred years or so old, and is in the same style of architecture as some of the newer buildings at Oxford of about the Stuarts' time. However, there is a great deal very ancient; we saw a dreadful dungeon with no window or light, and a hole where bread was thrown down to the poor prisoner. Such a wicked place as that was enough, I think, to bring a curse on the whole building. The gardens would delight you much, a mixture of fruit-trees and ruins, with enormous ivy-covered walls on one side, and splendid views at times. . . . We hastened down to see a torchlight procession of the students in honour of one of their professors. As we passed through the woods, on our way to the town, Nature gave us a torch procession of her own, for numberless fireflies were all among the trees, making a most beautiful show. In the distance below us we could see long lines of torches winding through the streets. When we had forced our way through the crowd, a most curious sight was there. Many hundred students went marching two and two, though at a considerable distance from each other, bearing large torches, each about a yard long, and waving them. They had captains

armed with swords and in uniforms, and great banners. I was at a corner of the street, and so could see two long lines of waving torches. The professor came out on the balcony and made a speech, thanking them for the honour, and they all shouted, 'Hoch' in reply to his call for the health of the University. I was glad to hear '*hoch*,' it reminded me of *Egmont*. The procession then set off again, and on we struggled, the heat of the torches in the narrow streets being very great, and the smoke as bad as can be seen in Wigan. We came in as black as could be, Nichol and Bryce especially, who had carried torches. Nichol has not even yet been able to get his face quite clean. Unfortunately, the students kept it up very late, and about one o'clock kicked up a tremendous noise in the streets, shouting '*Viva Garibaldi*' more than anything else."

"LUCERNE, *June 30, 1863.*

"We next came to Ulm, a town enough to make one rave with mediæval joy. You cannot imagine such an old-world place. There is not in all the town (though perhaps in one or two of the suburbs) a single house built in the modern style, no stucco work, Grecian pillars or pediments, no blocks of houses all in the same style, but each man has built as seemed right in his own eyes, and in consequence at every step you can pause and look with pleasure. And yet the houses do not look the slightest uncomfortable or falling down. The real thing is that it is not as in other towns where there are a few tumbledown houses to remind one of old houses; at Ulm the houses are repaired in the old style, and well repaired, too, so that though very ancient-looking there is no more sign of

decay than in any modern town, in fact less, as wretched stucco is not falling off. The fine old Cathedral was grievously injured by lightning a good while ago, losing more than its steeple, but it is still very fine. Hundreds and hundreds of swallows or martins were about it, more birds I think than I ever saw together. They seemed to have some game up, for they kept flying in large flocks into the great porch and chattering there for a while and out again, and after a turn or two they were all back. I do not believe the inhabitants know at all the beauties of their town. I daresay in their happy innocence they think all towns are built like theirs, for I could not find anywhere a single photograph of their streets. But glory of glories, I, Birkbeck Hill, schoolmaster, and your husband, have leant over a bridge and looked into the Danube. What do you say to that, wife? I looked into blue water which by this time perhaps has flowed into the Black Sea and swept through the Hellespont! To have seen the Meuse, the Moselle, the Neckar, and the Rhine was surely enough, but the Danube was too much to hope for. Surely I was not wrong in thinking of the Song of Simeon, for mine eyes had seen great wonders."

During these first years of married life Birkbeck Hill was only associated with his father in the work of the school; the household at Bruce Castle remained, as before, in the hands of his aunt, Mrs. Edwin Hill, and several of his cousins, her children, were engaged in the work of teaching. Birkbeck Hill, full of the new ideas with which his Oxford life had inspired him, must of necessity have been a somewhat incongruous element in a community which had continued to work out uninterruptedly the traditional family ideals. In

the letter to Miss Scott dated January 19th, 1857, he had already declared that he was "so surfeited with the Useful that he was beginning to hate it." Probably the following dialogue, although undated, was written soon after his final return home. It must be regarded simply as a small blowing off of steam, and is perhaps mainly amusing because Dr. Johnson is still nothing to him but the "great lexicographer." That "a spade was Capital," and that in ventilation and in the reform of the currency lay the salvation of man, were undisputed axioms in the little community at Bruce Castle.

Dialogue between a father and a suitor for his daughter's hand :—

Father. What, sir, is your opinion of Dr. Johnson? Do you revere that great man?

Suitor. I adore him. He is the only doctor I have any trust in. I take his mixtures daily, and at a moderate estimate I have swallowed enough of his pills to kill an elephant.

F. Hold, sir, hold! You are an ignoramus, sir. The Dr. Johnson I mean was the author of the immortal Dictionary.

S. Dictionary, sir, Dictionary? Why, sir, I am the man for your Dictionary. I never write a letter, sir, I assure you, without looking into a Dictionary a dozen times to see how the words are spelt. The short ones I can manage well enough, but though short words are all very well for talk, give me your long ones for a letter. They help so to get you through to that frightful third page. Dr. Johnson then for me.

F. Sir, I am satisfied; and so, sir, no doubt, is the

shade of the great lexicographer. But to my next question. What, sir, are your views on currency?

S. Currency, sir, currency? What are my views of currency?

F. Yes, sir, on currency—currency, I say.

S. Well, sir, if you will have my views on currency, I should say, sir, that the great lexicographer, as you call him, would have spelt it with a k.

F. Sir, sir, I am shocked, positively shocked. You are an ignoramissimus. But, sir, if you can't spell currency, do you know that a spade is Capital, or do you not know it, sir?

S. (*aside*). A spade is Capital, is it? I wonder what a shovel is? (*Aloud*). Oh yes, sir, a spade is Capital, no doubt of it. It is always described as such in the catalogue of agricultural implements.

F. Sir, I am delighted to hear it. It shows that sound principles of currency are on the spread. What, sir, do you think of ventilation?

S. Ventilation, sir, ventilation? What do I think of ventilation? (*Aside*). Who the dickens knows what ventilation is? (*Aloud*). Why, sir, what I think of ventilation is just the same, sir, as Dr. Johnson thought of ventilation, and he, sir, thought it was currency.

F. Then, sir, the great lexicographer was right, for in a certain sense it is a kind of currency. But, sir, do you approve of that ridiculous, foolish, and monstrous thing called a roof, or do you like one vast hole overhead, to let out the tainted air of civilisation and to let in the free air of nature?

S. Do I approve of a roof, sir? No, sir, certainly not, not personally. Oh no, sir, I am not pledged to a roof.

F. I am glad to hear that, sir. I always live in a draught.

S. So do I, sir. In fact, I always live in two, three on a Sunday.

F. Sir, I honour you. And now, sir, as my last question I should like to know your opinion of things in general.

S. My opinion of things in general? Oh yes, sir; certainly, sir. You would like to know my opinion of things in general? Well, then, sir, briefly stated my opinion is this. That if, sir, there were more men like you, things in general would be very different from what they are now. There, sir.

F. You overcome me. In you I recognise my long-wished-for son-in-law. My daughter's hand is yours, and may the shade of the great lexicographer smile upon you—I may say give currency to the union.

In the year 1863 a complete rearrangement of the school took place. Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Hill quitted the Castle, Mr. Arthur Hill and his sister-in-law, Miss Maurice, moved into the Priory, while Birkbeck Hill came back to his old home with his wife and children. In 1868 a further change was effected by the retirement of his father from all participation in the work of the school; it seemed to be settled that Birkbeck Hill should remain a schoolmaster to the end of his life.

And yet he, and still more his wife, would have dearly liked to give up the school when the various changes were under discussion in 1863. Family tradition is, however, very hard to break at all times, and in this case Birkbeck Hill could not face the pain which his abandonment of the school would have inflicted on his father. In spite, however, of his reluctance to continue in his profession, he certainly

possessed the family secret of success as a school-master.

Under his rule the standard of scholarship was much raised, as a more than creditable number of successes at Oxford and Cambridge showed; he had the valuable gift of choosing able masters; he inherited from his father the yet happier gift of inspiring enthusiasm among the best of his pupils. One old Brucian yet remembers the series of lectures on the Commonwealth which he gave his boys throughout one winter's evenings. Lecturer and boys alike were stirred with the story of Eliot and Hampden, Strafford and Pym and Cromwell, except indeed one slow, sleepy lad who made the Headmaster's eyes twinkle by declining to admit that the name of Cromwell had ever penetrated through his dreams. He yet remembers the delight which the older boys felt when they were advanced to do their Latin with the Headmaster; how interesting the lessons were, and yet how strict the accuracy exacted. He remembers yet more vividly the talks on the way to the bathing-pool, when the privilege of walking with Dr. Hill was eagerly sought, and when yet all could share in the talk poured forth for them. And in the football field, the cricket field, and the fives court he was no whit less eager than his pupils. For many years Bruce Castle had always a certain number of Spaniards and Spanish Americans among the boys. One day Birkbeck Hill, whilst turning over the pages of some account of travel in Mexico, came, to his delight, on the description of a game of cricket. Certain members of the team told the traveller that they had learnt to play at Bruce Castle, and to judge by their play they would seem to have well maintained the tradition of their old school. It was not teaching, nor in any sense the training of

his boys, that tried him. One who was for many years a much valued master and friend writes of him : "He understood boys and won their confidence, and must have helped hundreds to be true and honourable men. We regarded him, masters and boys alike, not only with respect, but with affection."

Had Birkbeck Hill been freed from the worries inseparable from the management of a private school, he might have remained a Headmaster to the end of his life.

In the move from the Priory to Bruce Castle he gained a pleasure to which he was peculiarly sensitive—the pleasure of watching his children grow up in a home round which all his own childish memories were gathered.

For his wife there was more to lose and less to gain in the exchange of her quiet home for the mistress-ship of a large establishment. Yet she was a born administrator, and threw herself into her work with all the ardour of her eager nature. Every detail in the management of a household, which rarely fell below a hundred, was known to her ; the dairy and the little dairy farm were constantly supervised by her ; she was auditor of the steward's accounts ; sick-nurse to the boys in time of illness,—“We had more confidence in her than in our medical attendant,” writes one who lived long at Bruce Castle. “How well she managed her big household and large staff of servants, men and women both ! Everything went on smoothly and without any friction.” And yet withal she never failed in the tenderest and most devoted care of her nursery full of children. In the midst of all her busy life she yet found time to sing old songs of her Lancashire home to the little ones, to learn Latin grammar with her boys, to read French and History with her girls, and,

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by her beautiful gift of reading aloud, to open to them the magic worlds of Scott and Dickens, Marryat and Kingsley.

But the life told heavily on her. She wrote to her husband, after some years at Bruce Castle, "I am afraid my long holiday has not done me good, for certainly I dislike the life here worse than ever, and sigh for rest (comparative, I mean ; I do not care for idleness) more than ever. If only I could teach the children and look after you and them, I should find enough to occupy me, and do not think I should lead a useless life. I am so weary, . . . but do not worry about me. We all have our bad days now and then, and I think I have learnt not to be beaten by them. I wish I could come to you, and have the refreshment of one such walk as our Turbia one, and forget servants, boys, and masters for one day."

Hard work in the school was, however, happily tempered for both of them by many pleasant holidays, spent for the most part amidst the much loved haunts of boyish holidays at the English Lakes. At all times in his life Birkbeck Hill was never so happy as when dwelling within the sound of falling waters and in the peace of the hills. He was one to whom the mountains "called."

The few letters which remain of those he wrote during his life as a schoolmaster are mostly dated from Cumberland or Scotland. In August 1868 he wrote a birthday letter to his little son Norman, from Buttermere, in Cumberland. In it he describes "a long walk I had over the mountains. I got up early, and had a little milk and some bread, and then I set off. When I came to the mountain I took the wrong way by mistake," more than once in fact, "and when I came at last to an inn where they gave me some

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breakfast, what time do you think it was? Why, nearly three o'clock, when you had finished dinner."

It must have been during this holiday that he left behind workmen engaged in hanging the Morris daisy pattern paper—then a very new departure in Art—in the dining-room at the Castle. One day a telegram found its way ten miles over the mountains to the little Fish Inn at Buttermere. Mr. Arthur Hill had been so appalled at the ugliness of the paper that he had taken it on himself to stop the workmen until he made sure they were in very truth carrying out his son's directions. Happily the paper was hung, and became in time a fitting background for the small but beautiful little collection of paintings which it was Birkbeck Hill's joy to make. Of these none gave more pure delight than those he bought from Arthur Hughes,—"Mr. Painter," as the Hill children called him,—a friend who visited him often, and who always brought with him, as the very atmosphere in which he dwelt, a sense of tender poetry and delicate playfulness as delightful in his talk as in his pictures.

In the August of 1872 he wrote from Braemar to his second daughter, Lucy :—

"I liked your letter very much ; it was so full of commas, only they were all full stops. Full stops, you know, are better than nothing ; but commas—well, you know all the delights of commas. I am glad to hear you are so wonderfully good a child. All Southport and Birkdale is full of your praise. The bathing-women let poor people get drowned while they stand with their backs to them praising your great propriety of behaviour, and the donkey-boys with tears in their eyes wish their donkeys would follow in your steps.

You can imagine what pride and pleasure I have as a father at hearing of such a daughter. While your sister Margaret behaves herself with great discretion, your brothers, Maurice and Normie, will have to be renounced by you. They put their elbows on the table, fill their mouths too full, make noises, and altogether behave much as did the Ancient Britons before Julius Cæsar taught them better. The only consolation to us is to think that little boys who act so often get choked as a judgment."

In August 1873 he wrote to his father again from Buttermere. This time he had all his seven children with him.

"We have the roughest—but as far as I am concerned the healthiest of weather. As I write I can look out through the open window on to the lake, which has its waves all whitening beneath the squalls which follow each other in rapid succession. On the other side of the lake rises a mountain, dark green with fern at its roots, and wild above with crags which jut out through the lighter green of the grass. Clouds rest on it one moment, and then the sunshine comes chasing them away, to be chased away in its turn by another cloud. Walter is busy on the window-seat with some bricks and tin soldiers; Baby is in bed—or at least ought to be; and Maurice, Norman, Lucy, and Leonard are on guard in their robber-fort on the shores of a certain lake in Mexico. They each bear a mysterious name of their own, and I find I commonly pass among them as Don Normando, a haughty ruler of an adjoining country and one of their greatest enemies. They now and then sally forth and make an inroad into the house, threatening

‘the good woman’—and a very good woman our Hannah is—with instant death if she does not give them a supply of food to bear off to their fortress.”

Bun loaf and German sausage were the viands generally secured, the latter most often conceded to the wheedling tongue of the girl in the robber-band.

In August 1874 a holiday, this time without the children, was passed by Birkbeck Hill and his wife in Cumberland and Westmorland. As usual, his days were spent in long mountain walks. Norman, the boy with the August birthday, again got a long letter from his father. In it he mentioned his nephew and niece, the fatherless children of his sister, Mrs. Scott, who were at all times scarcely less dear to him than his own sons and daughters. During the last years of his life, which he passed in Hampstead, this nephew, Harold Spencer Scott, was his constant companion. After his death, Mr. Scott completed his unfinished work on the *Lives of the Poets* with a rare taste, and that enthusiasm for accuracy which was the chief characteristic of his uncle’s scholarship.

TO HIS SON NORMAN.

“MARDALE, August 8, 1874.

“I hope you will see as many birthdays as your great-grandfather, the fine old man whom I loved so much, and that when you are drawing close to the end of life—for the end will come—you may be able to say with him, that you would gladly live it all again. Your short life has been a source of great happiness to your mother and myself, and I hope that each one of your brothers and sisters, counting Bertha

and Harold among them, will always have good reason for thinking with pleasure on the 8th day of August.

“And now for telling you all our adventures, for adventures we have had. In the first place we are alive, in the second place this inn is not so well provisioned as it was a few hours since, and in the third place your mother can walk, as I told her on the mountains, like a Trojan or a moss-trooper, or a rural postman who does not own a donkey like Buttermere Harry. Get out your maps, so that you can follow our route. Have your own guide-book open, and the Pedestrian's and Miss Martineau's; assume a general position of looking towards all the points of the compass at the same time, and tap the barometer a good many times. That will enable you to understand our position last Thursday when we started for Patterdale. I carried hanging to one shoulder the new bag containing all the clothes we had, and to the other our waterproofs. In my hand I bore an umbrella. Mother had the maps, and she had a long walking-stick with a hook by which she could hook me up if I had fallen down a precipice. We went up between Smallwater and Bleawater, and Mother climbed very well. We reached the top of High Street, and walked along—having Hayeswater on our left—to Angle tarn, just above Patterdale. We looked out for red deer all the way, but we could not see them. At Patterdale we stayed the night. After dinner we drove up to the little inn at the top of the Kirkstone Pass, and passed the night in the highest house in England, 1475 feet above the sea-level. Our bedroom was nine feet long and as many broad, and if I had had a tall hat on I should have touched the ceiling with it. This morning we set out for Mardale. Your mother

rivalled the chamois or the mountain roe in coming down the crags, and covered herself with immortal glory and no bruises. When we had gone a good way up High Street a violent storm of rain came on, and the clouds came down too, and there we were in the midst of the finest prospects, only we could not see them. I knew, however, pretty roughly our way, though I had never been over this ground before, but I had my maps and the compass. So I set our course first southward, and then when I had gone far enough, I went eastward. Had I been alone, I should not have cared much, but I had my umbrella and your mother. Which of the two suffered you shall soon know. Before long I found I was getting too much one way, and so I despatched an intelligent detachment, consisting of myself, a short way forward, to see where we were. I took care not to go so far but that I could see Mother easily. I found, however, we had gone too far in this direction, and so looking at my compass set ourselves northward. Mother kept up as few women could, and was as cool as she was wet. It was raining furiously, and we, like the old man in the beginning of *Little Jack*, were in the midst of a wide uncultivated moor in the North of England. All of a sudden through the mist I saw something bobbing along. It was moving too fast for a sheep and too bobbingly. What could it be? Presently it came on to higher ground, and then I saw two men. I shouted to them, and I found they were two miners going home earlier than usual, as it was Saturday. They slackened their pace to ours, and then we found we had two and a half miles' walking along High Street till we should come to the best place to go down. High Street, with some reason, is believed to be a road made by the Romans. There it ran, plain enough, grassed all over,

but clearly cut, about 2600 feet above the sea, and we were very glad to get such smooth walking after the rocks and swampy places. The wind blew, and presently the umbrella, not Mother, gave way. On we trudged, the rain hitting us like hail, while I felt it running down not outside but inside my clothes. Below us, in a slight break in the storm, we saw Hayewater, looking very dark. At last we reached the pass, and there, as the clouds had lifted, I thanked our mining friends, and giving them a present, let them go on at their own speed. We could see Mardale, but we had still a long descent to make. At last we reached the inn and our tea. Some day I hope you will make the walk yourself, and then you will see what sort of a mother you have. If you boys talk of girls being muffs you must remember that your mother was once—some while ago, perhaps—a girl.

“As we went up on Thursday the weather was so fine and I felt in such good spirits that I turned out a very great poet. Most of my lines have been forgotten. Your mother, though very good on her feet, does not always know what is good poetry, but one verse has happily been preserved. It is as follows:—

My spirits rise as rise the hills,
But do not fall as fall the waters;
They foam along as foam the rills,
And dance as dance my darling daughters.

With such a walker for your mother and such a poet for your father, you ought to be happy children.”

In 1875, however the Cumberland hills were deserted for the vicarage of an old friend in Kent. On August 1, Birkbeck Hill wrote to his father from Shepherd's Well:—

“Walter and Edmund were so delighted with the wild poppies. I had them out yesterday early before breakfast, and we went through a field of barley. The path was as narrow as a path could be, as the barley brushed one on either side. The little men were clad in blue, and as they ran through the barley, holding up bunches of bright poppies, with their little heads and blue shoulders just showing, it was a pretty sight. After breakfast I set off for a long walk, to try and find Edmund Strode. . . . I walked at least twenty-two miles, besides the walk with the children, but after a bath and tea I was not tired, and proposed a stroll in the evening with Annie and Margaret.”

Again he wrote, twelve days later :—

“The life of Shepherd’s Well is like that of the great world at the present time, and unless, like the *Times*, I begin to preach on the desperate wickedness of the people among whom I live, and the age in which I live, I shall scarcely fill four pages. Though I have watched my neighbours closely, I have not been able to discover anything unusually wicked about them. Eddie, in fact, is so little affected by the shocking luxury of the age that he refused cherry pie and custard and asked for bread and cheese instead, while Walter when he sees tapioca pudding blesses his stars and calls it luxury. I must, however, in justice to the writer in the *Times*, admit that when there happened to be on the tea-table at the same time a seed cake and a plum cake, everyone but myself slighted the homely seed and took the plum in preference. So far as this goes, it bears out the writer’s argument; but after all it is some while since Cincinnatus and Dentatus and the rest were renowned for their

simple repasts, so that the year 1875 is not quite the first when luxury has prevailed either at Rome, London, or Shepherd's Well. . . . You will see I am taking to moralising. I suppose it is the air of the Vicarage that inspires me. It is scarcely possible to sit long in a vicar's arm-chair without the spirit beginning to move one, and when the spirit once begins, it is only the end of the sheet of paper that can stop one."

These letters, written during his summer holidays, give the impression that Birkbeck Hill was a man in vigorous health. An enthusiastic walker he certainly was, and that not only during his holidays. Frequently a pleasant summer morning would find him out in the country lanes, which in those days still encircled Tottenham, at an hour when most of his household was asleep. Eight-o'clock breakfast would bring him home after a walk of six, or even as much as eight miles round Southgate or Epping Forest. But even as early as the summer of 1875 there were signs of serious overstrain. For some years past he had added literary work to his already busy life as a schoolmaster.

In 1869 he sent his first review to Mr. Harwood, then and for long after, Editor of the *Saturday Review*. It was the beginning both of regular work for that paper and of a warm friendship with its Editor. In Birkbeck Hill, Mr. Harwood discovered a happy power of making amusing reviews out of dull books, and he kept him busy with minor poets and indifferent novelists so long as his own connection with the paper lasted. Although it was some years before Dr. Hill published anything more lasting than articles in various newspapers, yet it is interesting to note that in this first review, written in the early spring of 1869, there

occurs a long quotation from Boswell's *Johnson*. In his preface to his own edition of Boswell, which he wrote some time in 1886, he tells us that he had purchased, eighteen years before, "in an old bookshop almost under the shadow of a great cathedral," a second-hand copy of *Boswell*. This quotation in his review looks as if he had his "five little second-hand volumes" well by heart before he wrote it; in that case the cathedral might be that of Carlisle, where he was in the autumn of 1868. From 1869 he was a frequent writer for the Press. It was work he liked, and felt he could do well, but he thereby seriously added to the already heavy work of his profession.

In the latter part of 1875 he fell seriously ill, all the more seriously because the illness was due to the effects of years of overwork and overworry rather than to any specific disease. The most trying symptom of his illness lay in attacks of acute nervous asthma, a form of misery to which he was painfully liable for the rest of his life. His wife was advised to take him to the Riviera; she faced the long journey with a brave heart, although she was warned by the doctors, who nevertheless recommended their departure, that her husband's strength might not prove equal to the strain.

Happily their worst fears proved groundless. In the midst of a beauty, then new to him, in the pure brilliance of the Riviera climate, and in the interest of an hotel life, which amused him by its dissimilarity to his own home surroundings, Birkbeck Hill rapidly recovered his health in a considerable measure. Nevertheless, he was doomed henceforth to lead the life, more or less, of an invalid. Though but forty years old, the young people in his hotel confessed

afterwards that they had made bets among themselves as to how many years over sixty he numbered.

A certain stoop of the shoulders, due mainly to the laboured breath of an asthmatic man, came to be habitual with him; the little brown velvet skull-cap, without which few in later years ever saw him, was then first adopted, and though it hid the baldness which had come upon him very early in life, it yet undoubtedly increased his look of age; a certain fineness of feature and delicacy of hand, so often seen in those who withdraw from the active battle of life into a world of quiet thought and scholarship, from this time became increasingly noticeable in him; more and more came the student's look into his eyes at such times, when the quick flash of humour did not set their depths sparkling.

That illness had not robbed him of his old love of walking the following letters show. They were written after some months of idleness had restored him, but much as he enjoyed the little tour described it did not prove a wise test of his strength. He was better idling in the gardens of Mentone. His companions were, one a young American whose acquaintance he had made in his hotel, the other Mr. Edmund Strode, an old Brucian, and a very favourite pupil of former days.

To his wife, who had returned to take charge of the school so soon as she was satisfied with her husband's progress towards recovery, Birkbeck Hill wrote early in February.

TO HIS WIFE.

"ALASSIO, *February 3, 1876.*

"Yesterday Edmund Strode, Cope, and I set out from San Remo. The scenery was not very interesting for the Riviera. Nevertheless, there was much to see. We passed through some curious little towns. In one I saw six people engaged in lifting one sack into a cart, while thirteen others were looking on. The inn at Porto Maurizio was a stranger one than even that at Ypres. Our bedrooms opened one into the other, which was pleasant, for we were up a great dark staircase on the third floor, out of reach apparently of everyone. The floors were of brick; the washing basin of the pie-dish order; the mattress was either of shavings or of twigs, but the beds were quite clean, and answered the purposes of a bed very well. Being tired, I asked for a cup of tea. What they brought I cannot tell, but I enclose two of the leaves for your inspection. Keep them as a curiosity. I took one spoonful, and then we all sniffed at it, and tried to guess what it was. Edmund Strode thought it was tobacco-water.

"Our dinner was very poor. Macaroni to begin with, then veal cutlets which were not to be enjoyed unless eaten with faith, two thrushes between us, and dessert. I asked for milk, but I was told there was not any *marchand de lait* in the town. The waiter who did up the bedrooms first took the basin full of dirty water, opened the window and, without calling out the Italian for heads below, pitched the water out. When he had gone and all was silent, we went out to explore for some water. We found the supply in a copper cauldron that would have done for Macbeth, with a copper ladle. There was not much, but we filled up our

basins and bottles, and felt we could have some chance of a wash. I asked the waiter to bring 'de l'eau chaude' the next morning. 'De l'eau chaude?' he said in a tone of surprise. 'De l'eau chaude,' I repeated with calm firmness. 'Pour le café?' he said. 'Non, pour me laver,' I answered. He looked bewildered, and went off. The next morning he came in with the coffee, but no hot water. 'Mais où est l'eau chaude?' I said. 'L'eau chaude?' he asked. 'Oui, l'eau chaude,' I answered. He seemed disconcerted, but answered, 'Je vais la chercher.' He presently came back with a kind of saucepan in which no doubt the water was boiled for the coffee. Our breakfast was of the smallest dimensions. A small roll each and butter, and a knife and plate between us all three; coffee and milk enough to make one good breakfast-cup.

"The scenery was very fine on our way to Alassio. Who can tell its glories? The Bay of Alassio seemed to me almost the most beautiful place I had seen. Far away the snow-covered Apennines stretched to the south. In the middle of the bay, where the land jutted out as it did at the harbour of Mentone, rose a rocky island, rising to a great height, crowned with an old fort. We might, if Fortune should favour us, stay with great pleasure some day or other at Alassio."

Birkbeck Hill returned to Alassio that same spring with his wife, who came to rejoin him, after the term's heavy work was over. She brought with her their little son Walter, a child who throughout his brief life was his father's most beloved companion. The three had a happy time together among the gardens of Alassio, and made good friends there. The memories of the child, the beauty of the place, and the recollection of the kind welcome they had met with, all combined to bring

Birkbeck Hill and his wife back to this favourite spot in the winters of 1895 and 1896.

TO HIS WIFE.

“GENOA, *February 5, 1876.*

“You must tell the children what pleasure their letters give me. Let them only tell me any little incident of home life and they will have written a letter which in my eyes at least will be very good. I have just been to the Post Office and got your letter. I am very sorry indeed to hear how sad a time you are having with the accounts. You are working and I am idling. It is the old savage life all over again, where the women do all the toil and the men have all the pleasure. I can, however, do you some good by my letters, and I will write as often as I can. Friday we sent off our luggage to Genoa, and trudged on for Voltri. In the towns we came to, there was great activity. Ships were being built; in one small place we counted ten, and everything seemed very thriving. Scarcely anyone begged of us; only one poor fellow, whose face I liked, and who was trudging along the road in search of work, as he said and as I believed. In England I would not have given to him, but here I do not know what provision is made for the poor. We gave him a franc, and in a very quiet voice he said, ‘*Merci, vous m’avez rendu la force.*’ He pushed on ahead of us, but presently we found him sitting by a little stream drinking the water.

“We began to be hungry ourselves, and seeing a soldier go into a house that had on the walls a handsome coat of arms painted, remembering the Grenadier of the Nursery Rhymes, jumped at once to the conclu-

sion that it was an inn. It was only a custom-house station, and so we had to push on to a little town. There we could find no inn, though we went right through it, but a man directed us to one. It had no sign of any kind, not even a bush. It was a very queer-looking place, but we had a clean tablecloth and clean napkins. Soon they served up an excellent omelette, and then cold cauliflower cooked. A Swiss who joined our meal mixed up vinegar, oil, salt, pepper, and lemon juice, and soon made an excellent salad. We finished up with the usual dessert and really good coffee. Be not sceptical. The charge for all—wine included—was two francs a head. The Swiss told me that he had been called out to serve as a soldier in the yearly drill, but as his two brothers went he thought that was enough. So he went to his doctor and said, 'I have a bad leg.' 'I do not see anything the matter with it,' said the doctor. 'Yes, look, I have a plaster on it,' he replied. The doctor was convinced, and gave him a certificate. He was very friendly to the French, but hated Louis Napoleon, who, he said, had beyond all doubt had Cavour poisoned. He walked with us some part of our way.

"We watched a set of fishermen playing a curious game with two balls, two pieces of wood, and an iron ring set in the ground. They showed wonderful skill. One of the best players was a man of about sixty. Part of the way we travelled through a flat country highly cultivated, with the fruit-trees either in flower or coming out. The fields were watered from shallow wells, and the water was raised up by a bucket at the end of a long pole balanced on an upright pole. The ploughs were of a most primitive order, such as Virgil must have seen. Little towns were perched all about the hills, with snow-covered mountains in the rear, and

every town had its slender bell tower rising up. I saw none to equal in beauty our old ivy-mantled church tower. In one town we saw an old man and woman buying and selling hay. It had to be weighed. First of all they pushed a pole through a kind of weighing machine, which was next fastened to the hay bands that bound it. Then they each put an end of the pole on their shoulders, and so lifted it all up from the ground, noticing as they lifted it the weight marked. It was a very heavy burden for the old folk. The costumes of the people became much gayer and more varied as we got into Italy, and their looks improved. Tell Maurice and Norman that our hotel is in the Via Balbi. I have not found the Via Caii yet, but I have no doubt that in the Via Balbi I have seen the very wall that Balbus built."

"MENTONE, *February* 19, 1876.

"Your letter that arrived to-night has made me feel for you very much. If it were not that I fear to add to your troubles by giving you one more sick person to nurse, I would start by to-morrow morning's train and be with you on Wednesday at latest. I do not know if after all I ought not to return, as I cannot but hope that if I took matters quietly and kept in on raw days I might stand the change. At any rate, your health has to be considered as well as mine. . . . I only wish that we could give up the school as you say in your letters; but I fear it is impossible for the present. I do not think myself that I shall ever be the man I was. I doubt if I could earn enough to make the two ends meet, and I know if I once became really anxious about money matters I should soon lose whatever powers are left me. Your strength is so good that you may count

on a long life. If I give up for the present my writing, which I think I had better do, I can relieve you in some of your work.

“My ambition is pretty well ended. I am full of ambition, however, for our children, and most anxious not to be stinted in their education or in the start they shall each receive in life. They are admirably placed at present, and are deriving the greatest benefit. It is, however, very easy for me in this garden under the olive tree, with the sea beating as idly at my feet as I am myself idle, to write thus wisely, and to sacrifice at the present moment not myself but you. And yet if I could only be at work again—even examining Latin exercises—I feel I should be very happy.”

In the spring of 1876 Birkbeck returned to Bruce Castle to take up his work afresh, but it soon became painfully clear that his health was not sufficiently established to allow of any mental strain. After some months of indecision, a resolution to give up the school was taken; the rest of the year passed in arrangements to carry out this scheme of retirement and in searching for a new home. This slight record of his life as a schoolmaster can be best closed by his own farewell to his past pupils, who had combined to present him with a Testimonial. Characteristically he had asked them to spend the greater part of the money subscribed in books for his library. The happiness he had in unpacking and arranging some hundreds of volumes was the unalloyed pleasure of one who meant to change a busy life of business for a quiet existence in “a houseful of books and a garden of flowers.” He had already moved into such a house before he wrote the following letter :—

TO COMYNS CARR.

“BURGHFIELD, NEAR READING,

“*June 14, 1878.*

“MY DEAR CARR,—I have already written to you as Chairman of the Committee [of the Testimonial presented to Dr. Birkbeck Hill] to express my acknowledgment of the great kindness shown me by so many among my former pupils. . . . I can say with truth that I had no expectation, on my retirement, that I should receive a Testimonial from my former pupils. I had withdrawn from the school at an age when most men see before them a great many years of active life, and I know that men who seek retirement early cannot reasonably expect that any honour should be done them. But perhaps the life of a schoolmaster cannot properly be measured by years alone. Some men indeed can bear ‘all that weight’—not of learning, nor even of teaching, but of teaching and managing combined—‘lightly as a flower.’ My father, for instance, surpassed me as much in endurance as he did in zeal and unwearying industry. But to me the wear and tear of life were very great. . . . Heavy, trying, and anxious though in my last years at Bruce Castle I had found the labour, yet the mere management of boys was always to me a very easy task. . . . A man who, from an overstrain of work, has broken down in health, as I broke down nearly three years ago, does not willingly dwell in his mind on any of the circumstances which led to his illness. I find that I still shrink from even thinking on much that is past and gone never to return.

“But none of my painful thoughts are, in any way, connected with the conduct of any of my old pupils. I do not think that any of them often worried me.

The few worries that I still recall, only make me smile now, if not laugh outright. In truth, I doubt if any man had under him a better set of boys. I feel sure that no one ever had a more kindly set. It is a great pleasure to me to know that, among some of the best of my personal friends, I reckon not a few of those who were once my pupils. That I have now this affection is, I believe, chiefly due to the fact that I have always held the belief, and I hope acted up to the belief, that almost first among the rights of man is the right everyone has to a happy childhood. I can say with honest pride that no boy was made by me unhappy because nature had made him dull."



Annie Mill.
Portrait painted by Arthur Hughes in 1870.

CHAPTER VI

Home found at Burghfield—Country life—Among “swells and swellesses”
—Publication of first book on Johnson—A pleasant appreciation—
Memoir of Sir Rowland Hill—Westminster Abbey—Anecdote of
General Gordon—A great snowstorm—*Letters of Gordon*—*Hymn of the*
Pharisees—Letter to Professor Price to propose a new edition of
Boswell—Criticism of Macaulay.

It was in the summer of 1877 that Dr. Hill and his family quitted Tottenham, just fifty years from the time when his grandfather had first migrated thither from Birmingham.

A new home had been found in the uplands beyond Reading, on the borders of wide stretches of fir-forest and common, rich in the glories of gorse and heather. The house was a modest one enough, low and creeper-covered, with just enough garden and breezy meadow to give a sense of space to the large family of young people who came to dwell in it. Although not by any means large, it was yet a pleasantly elastic house, always big enough to take in a guest or two, even when school and college vacations brought all the brothers home. To the young people it was a very happy home, though their pleasures lay only in country pursuits and endless eager talks among themselves. With five sons to start in the world, there was little money to spare; plain living was most certainly the rule in the house, but there was, too, plenty of high *talking*, perhaps even a reasonable amount of high *thinking*, among the eager young folk. In the long rambles, in

the work in the garden, in the winter skating, Birkbeck Hill constantly shared ; but when the talk grew most argumentative, when social problems, when theology, when a new novelist were under discussion, he mostly withdrew to the quiet of his study and the companionship of his books. Thither his little son Walter followed to his own nook on the vast sofa, for the kinship of thought was too close between these two for the child's presence ever to be a bar to the father's work.

To Birkbeck Hill Burghfield certainly brought the quiet and leisure he sought. He was not a strong man, nor indeed ever free for many days together from the miseries of asthma, but nevertheless his life for the next few years was both a busy and a happy one. Of all the family the change was least congenial to his wife. Life in a country village was cruelly monotonous to a woman of her brilliant social powers, and their retirement had been too much hurried on to allow them to accumulate sufficient means to give her the ease that her own health sorely needed. Even after rest had largely restored her husband, the main care of the income and family continued to fall upon her ; for though he both could and did write regularly and vigorously, yet anything like business worry resulted immediately in nervous asthma.

Asthma, happily however, never robbed him of his power of both seeing and making a joke, and he continued his writings for the *Saturday Review*, week after week, with untiring humour. He also not infrequently wrote for the *World* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*. In the latter paper his contributions generally took the form of letters on any passing event which for the moment took his fancy. One such, which appeared in 1880, has a more permanent value than the rest in the description which it gives of his Berkshire home. To

this may be added an amusing account of county society addressed to his old College friend, Charles Faulkner.

“INCENDIARISM IN THE SOUTH OF ENGLAND.

“To the EDITOR of the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

“SIR,—The pleasant country of heaths and pine woods which lies to the south of Reading, and stretches far to east and west, on many a night at the present time is lighted up with the fires of incendiaries. Owing to the long drought the gorse and the heather blaze up the moment a match is set to them, and should there be any wind the fire is borne along with great swiftness. Many a common which ought at the present time to be all golden with the flower of the gorse is ugly with charred sticks, while the pine woods too frequently present a still more melancholy sight. A neighbour of mine whose house commands a wide spread of country, told me that a few nights ago he could see no fewer than seven fires at one time. I have not myself counted more than three or four at once. So common a sight has a fire become, that we rarely forget each evening to look all round to see in what quarter of the sky the glow will be seen that night.

“Last Sunday my children came to tell me that there was a great fire a short way off. It was but eight o'clock, and the sun had not long set. Nevertheless, the flames shone bright against the western sky, while the gentle breeze which was blowing carried along with it a cloud of smoke. We hurried off to the scene. Before we reached the spot, night had come on, and then ‘the darkness of the scenery’ was lighted by stranger fires than I had ever seen : the dry gorse and

heather that grew both around and among a wood of pine trees had been fired. The flames on the ground were dancing up and down like fiery waves, while overhead the fir-trees were in a blaze. Had the lower boughs been all lopped away I doubt whether the upper branches could have caught fire, but mixed with the bigger trees were many saplings. As the fire reached these, it ran up them and swept along their boughs, presenting one of the most beautiful sights that it has been my lot to see—an endless succession of Christmas trees, which were one moment lighted up and the next were left in darkness. The upper boughs of the saplings were interlaced with the lower boughs of the larger trees, and so the fire found an easy path. I do not think, however, that it made its way to the tops of the biggest trees. In the open places the gorse rose to the height of six or seven feet, and when it caught fire it sent up a mighty blaze.

“As I drew near I saw against the light a few dark forms. These were two or three men watching the advance of the fire and waiting to check it when it should begin to spread over a part where there was less to burn, and where, therefore, it could be more easily dealt with. On this side, too, it had to make its way against the very gentle breeze which was blowing, and for that reason also it was more manageable. We offered our aid, and were each armed with a large fir-branch. We moved along in line, much as men move in haymaking, and with our branches beat out the fire. He who came last had to keep careful watch lest from some spark which remained hidden, the flames should again burst out. Where there was much gorse our task became a hard one, and the heat was then almost more than we could bear. Nevertheless, before long

we had the satisfaction to see that along one side of the wood the fire was fairly beaten.

"We next went round to a part where we could see the flames shooting up high into the air. There very little could be done, as the fire, borne along by the wind through a dense scrub with fir-trees rising out of it, was raging fiercely. Even here there were parts that might have been saved, while in the beginning no doubt the fire could have been mastered; but though there were some hundreds of people gathered together, very few would lend a hand. Counting my own party, there were not, I believe, a dozen of us who tried to stop the sad waste. The feeling of the people was clearly against us. They began a little harmless chaff. 'Hallo!' they called out to one of the men who was working near me, whom I will call Brown. 'Hallo, we must make a list of you all. Put down first, Brown, gentleman.' I felt that it was not Brown who was meant. On this side the fire soon reached a ploughed field, and so burned itself out. On the third side was the house of a small farmer with his stacks of wood close to the gorse. He, poor man, had been at one time in great danger. Happily there was a good supply of water close at hand, and he had managed to get the nearest gorse well drenched before the fire, which had begun on the farther side of the wood, reached his yard. Him the people were willing to help. It was not against the farmers that they had any grudge. Nevertheless, more than one poor man in the last few weeks, living on the edge of a common, has had his little cottage burned down.

"While we were at the farm we saw the flames break forth on the very part where we had with so much trouble managed to put them out. We hastened round, and found that the heather had been wantonly

lighted in more places than one. The fire was again creeping beneath the trees, and once more we had to fight it and beat it down. Our task this time was an easier one, for the undergrowth here was not very thick. Before long we had a second time mastered our foe, and he did not break out a third time. It was growing late for country folk—nearly ten o'clock—and the crowd soon scattered, each one trudging off homeward. As we left behind us the still glowing embers we could see in the north-west the light of some distant fire which was at its height.

“On my way back I had some talk with a labouring man whom I chanced to overtake. I was anxious to learn from one of his class how it had come to pass that the feelings of the common people were, for the most part, with the incendiaries. He told me that when he was a lad every man would have done his utmost to stop the spread of such a fire; for in those days they had, he said, a great share in the commons. They could turn out their cows on them to graze, while they could cut and carry off the gorse and the turf. But many of the commons had since then been enclosed, while on those which were left open their claim to the gorse and the turf was resisted. How far his account is correct I do not know. I only repeat what he told me. I asked him whether the wood which we had just seen burned had ever in his memory been common land. ‘No,’ he said; ‘that had once been part of a farm, and had afterwards been planted.’ There had, therefore, never been any claim to common-rights so far as the scene of the destruction of last Sunday night was concerned. When once the terrible habit of incendiarism has been formed, no doubt it spreads like the fire which it makes its servant. Those who begin by burning commons are too apt to go on to burn enclosed

woods, and from enclosed woods they may perhaps go on to corn-stacks and to houses. At the same time it is by no means impossible that the poor people really have a grievance. To burn one's property does certainly seem a strange way of proving one's right to it, but even a rich man who finds himself aggrieved is not always strictly logical. Meanwhile we, who are neither squires nor peasants, are finding ourselves robbed of what we look upon as our undoubted right—our enjoyment of the beautiful scenery in the midst of which we had found a home. 'The guiltless eye,' to use Cowper's words,

'Commits no wrong, nor wastes what it enjoys.'

It may well feel injured when it is visited with so severe a punishment.

"In my ignorance both of the law and of the facts of the case, I cannot pretend to know where the cure lies for this sad state of things. I can only hope that a cure may be found, and that speedily.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

RUSTICUS.

"May 12, 1880."

TO CHARLES FAULKNER.

"THE POPLARS, BURGHFIELD,

"September 30, 1879.

"Can you not give me a day or two here on your way back to Oxford? I suppose you will have to return soon. I met Morris in coming here yesterday, and travelled down with him. . . . It seems likely that I shall have a peaceful time, and can promise you complete repose. Have you any work to do, here is your place to do it. We have risen a step—a very great step in the world—since we last saw you. The County

has at last called on us in the shape of the Right Honourable ——. I returned the call, and was plunged into the midst of a lawn-tennis party. I was taken past a bench of young ladies and seated by Mrs. ——. When once there I dared not move. I was conscious that I was staying too long, but I could not face the young ladies again. There were some military swells there in great yellow moustaches. I was in a flannel shirt. How I suffered! Lord! I mean Right Hon. ! what is man that thou so regardest him? Old — himself was not bad, but the swells and swelleses! I will introduce you to them, and we will talk in our most Radical style, and damn all parsons and squires and speak disrespectfully of the House of Lords. The worst of me is that while I can roar like a lion in writing, I am as fearful and weak-voiced as a mouse before respectable people. You shall be Moses and the spokesman, and I will be a chorus."

His contributions to the Press were not by any means the limit of his literary work, nor indeed his most important work. From the date of his purchase of the five little volumes of Boswell his reading had largely centred round Johnson; from time to time he wrote on subjects relating or akin to the man who, almost from the very first, became his hero. In 1874 it fell to his lot to review a new edition of Boswell, and in the minute care which he bestowed on this task he found a fresh incentive to Johnsonian studies. Once freed from the cares of his school, his mind turned more and more willingly to his favourite subject; he collected his scattered writings, recast and amplified them, added fresh matter, and in the end produced the little volume entitled *Dr. Johnson, his Friends and his Critics*. The

scholarship of this little book, so real and so pleasantly presented, merited a better reception than it got; that its soundness of learning was appreciated by some few whose good opinion was of high value is shown by the following anecdote.

Birkbeck Hill was one day in the Reading Room of the British Museum, intent on Boswellian researches. He asked permission of the chief of the Reading Room, at that time Mr. J. K. Fortescue [now Keeper of the Printed Books] for permission to work in the quieter precincts of the Large Room.

"I did not then know him," said Mr. Fortescue to one of Birkbeck Hill's children, "but one saw at a glance that he was the right sort of person to take there. As we went I asked him what was the subject on which he was engaged, and he answered that he had many things to look up about Dr. Johnson. He presently asked me, with the smile and look you know so well, 'Did I not think it were time Croker's Boswell was edited, or perhaps a new edition altogether brought out?' 'Yes,' I answered, 'but the man to do that is the author of a work less known than it ought to be—Dr. Hill, the writer of *Dr. Johnson, his Friends and his Critics*.'"

In after researches Birkbeck Hill had often to be grateful for a friendship so pleasantly begun; many a time did he subsequently appeal to Mr. Fortescue to lighten his laborious task as editor of Boswell, of Johnson, of Hume and of Swift, and never did he appeal in vain. Neither concerning this little Johnsonian volume nor the edition of Boswell's *Correspondence and Tour to Corsica*, which he published in 1876, do any letters remain. His next book was a much longer and heavier piece of work.

In August 1879 his uncle, Sir Rowland Hill, died.

Sir Rowland had himself appointed his nephew Birkbeck to be his biographer, and had entrusted to him all the papers necessary for the purpose. Among these was a long account of Postal Reforms, entitled *History of Penny Postage*, which had been compiled by Sir Rowland in conjunction with his brother Arthur. By an excess of deference to his father, Mr. Arthur Hill's feelings, which made him unwilling to recast what the old man had aided in writing, Birkbeck Hill himself owned that he had injured both the merit and the success of his book. At the same time the account of his ancestry and his uncle's early life is perhaps the best piece of prose he ever wrote.

At the conclusion of the book he inserted passages from a description of Sir Rowland Hill's funeral in Westminster Abbey, which he wrote immediately after the event. The ceremony was one to move him deeply, and the full account, originally meant only to preserve the memory of that memorable day in all its freshness in his own mind, is well worth quoting here.

"ACCOUNT OF MY UNCLE ROWLAND'S FUNERAL.

"We assembled in the dining-room at Bertram House. Except that there was an air of quietness, there was no sign in the company that we were come together to bury the master of the house. We did not see the coffin or the hearse. When I was summoned I took my seat in the carriage that was at the door, and owing to the nature of the drive [the carriage drive of the house] I did not even then see more than the carriage into which I stepped. My companions were A—, B—, and C—. A— explained the way in which his shirts were made. B— was as wise in his own eyes as ever. C— was quiet and unassuming.

“There was no touch of solemnity or mortality till we were close to the Abbey. There the great bell was tolling overhead. There was a great crowd, very quiet and orderly. It was not till we entered Dean’s Yard that I first really felt what it was that we had come to see and to do. The band of the Volunteers, all in black, were playing the Portuguese Hymn. The men were drawn up on each side of the roadway, with their arms reversed and their cheeks resting on the stocks of their guns. The notes of the band at once woke up the tenderest and most solemn feelings. The tears started into my eyes. When I got out of the carriage I saw for the first time the coffin with a beautiful shroud on it, covered with wreaths of fine flowers. We marched through the cloisters with the military music still in our ears. As we turned round a corner we saw the door of the Abbey open before us, and here I caught sight of my father, for whom I had been anxiously looking. Wonderful feelings swept through me—here we heard the organ—the ancient cloisters and the Abbey with its thousand memories, the dead man borne before us, we following after him who had known and revered him, the sight of his two aged brothers waiting in front to fall in with the other mourners, my own son with them and my brother, the priest in his white surplice. I remember how it burst upon me how noble and glorious is the thought that man has made to himself of his own immortality. The emotions swept reason before them, as a mighty stream sweeps down a barrier. I longed to be walking side by side with one of those nearest and dearest to me, but I could not change my place. I could only look at my father, my brother, and my son, as he stood by to fall in behind me. We entered the Abbey, and moved slowly along.

“If only I could keep up the lofty thoughts that filled me then, I too might find my last resting-place there, but I knew that the swell would sink. Yet I trust that some higher purpose may be left behind to raise the years of my life that are still left before me. As I passed up I heard my name mentioned, I know not by whom. I recognised also the old gardener at the Grove among the bystanders. I mention this to show how the swift glances of the mind never rest even among such wonderful emotions. As we entered the choir I longed to see my own wife and children. I saw her eyes fixed on me with tenderness and anxiety. Walter gazed at me with wonder in his dark eyes, Edmund with pleasure at discovering me. My father greatly took my thoughts. He and his brother walking together were the most touching part of all. The service I thought, as I always do, a good deal too long. A few sentences, a psalm or two, a few strains, and then all should be over.

“At the grave, as I gazed down on the coffin and read ‘Sir Rowland Hill, born Dec. 3rd, 1795, died Aug. 27, 1879,’ my mind was again wonderfully moved. I called to mind the thoughts in Thackeray’s lines on the Duke of Wellington, of his playing in his childhood by the banks of the Boyne. I thought how much was included between 1795 and 1879. The whole life of the dead man seemed to stand before me, from his childhood at Wolverhampton, where he played with his future wife, through his hard struggles, the contempt under which he had suffered, his poverty, up to the present glorious day when his countrymen thus honoured him. It is all very noble, I thought. But who can give words to the thoughts that thus sweep through the mind? I found often the tears in my eyes, but it was not so much tears for him as tears

over our common humanity and mortality. Not that I once thought of my own death, apart from the death of my fellow-men, but the music suddenly flooded the soul with the sense of man's nothingness and his short stay on earth. Emotion succeeded emotion with startling rapidity. Now this feeling of nothingness, next one of pride in all my great kinsman had done, then a feeling of high ambition, a longing that one of my children should rest here among the mighty dead, and then, again, the sense of our nothingness.

"I never once, as I looked into the grave, could think of the possibility of my uncle living in some other world. Had he been some great writer, the thought would have been most natural to me. But 'organisation is my forte,' and what place is there for organisation in heaven? His mind was a mind whose work lay in a workaday world. And yet had I thought of his love of astronomy I might have pictured him to myself learning with delight the secrets of that most perfect of all organisations—the stars. 'Organisation is someone else's forte,' he might now be softly whispering to himself.

"Well, I took my last leave of him, but my mind has not yet calmed down—it is Sunday, and he was buried on Thursday. It seems to me still as if I were treading some loftier scene. I scarcely dare think over certain passages in the ceremony without the tears starting into my eyes, and I hardly dare trust myself to speak of them."

The *Life of Sir Rowland Hill* met with no very speedy sale, though its reception by the Press was good. Had Birkbeck Hill written the whole himself in much shorter form, it would in all probability have proved a more popular book. As it was, he not only

suffered from the overweighting of his Memoir by the *History of Penny Postage*, but he had also to defend himself against his father's regret for the slight curtailment which he had permitted himself to make. In the following letter he also comments on the new task which he had undertaken. Before his last book was well off his hands, he had been asked to edit the letters of General—then only Colonel—Gordon, written to his sister from the Soudan. Gordon was a friend of his wife's brother, John Scott, at that time Vice-President of the International Courts in Alexandria. The publication of these letters, however, was a matter in which Gordon himself took no part, nor did he and Birkbeck Hill ever meet. All arrangements concerning the publication were made with Sir Henry Gordon. That Colonel Gordon, however, took some kindly thought of his editor may be inferred from the fact that he one day sought out a certain house in Bournemouth, where Dr. Hill's youngest boy was at school, and took the ten-year-old laddie for a walk, and tipped him a shilling at parting. "And," said the boy, "I didn't know he was a great man, and I spent it in sweets, when I might have bored a hole through it and kept it. I *was* a donkey."

TO HIS FATHER.

"THE POPLARS, BURGHFIELD,

"January 21, 1881.

"I quite agree with your general estimate of the *History* [of *Penny Postage*]. I look upon it as a very valuable and interesting work, and one that has taught me a great deal. It will be of the greatest service to the future historian. I do not myself find it dull reading, except perhaps in a very few places. And

most of it is interesting in a very high degree. But then I never complain of the size of a work which sets forth a really great mind. Such a mind cannot be understood in the reading of half an hour, or in an abridgment. It is generally the most frivolous people who have no time for reading, and who say that the pressure of life is so great that really a book must be cut down to the size of a magazine article. You will have been greatly pleased with FitzJames Stephens' letter. His opinion and Mr. Gladstone's are of great worth and great weight. I have quite got over the disappointment about the sale of the book, and can see that my hopes of its being a rapid one had been based rather on what I wished than what I had any reason to expect. I should be very sorry if all my long course of reading and meditation did not give me strength of mind to bear far greater disappointments than this. I could have no better reading to help me in this than Colonel Gordon's Letters. He is a man as indifferent to praise and the opinion of men as anyone could be. It is admirable to see how he only regards his work, and thinks nothing of what the world may say about it. After all, my disappointment is only one about money. The general opinion of the book is all that we could desire. I had, moreover, a great deal of pleasure—of which I cannot be deprived—in forming plans how we were to spend the vast sum which we were to receive. All last summer I had out my atlas and my guide-books, and took myself, Annie, and the children many a tour in France, the Rhineland, and Switzerland. Those tours we have *had*—at least I have—and greatly did I enjoy them. I visited many a place which I daresay I shall never see, and found that not a word had been said too much in its praise. Now I have Colonel Gordon's Letters to supply me with fresh airy

castle-building, though I fear I shall not be able to persuade any of the others to join in laying the foundations. They ask too much for realities, and cannot feed on dreams. Annie has told you of our snowy world. It is indeed a strange sight, such a sight as I did not think was to be seen out of the mountainous country. Lucy yesterday went to visit some of her poor people, and I accompanied her, so as to be ready to dig her out of the snowdrifts should it be needful. It so chanced that we stopped just opposite a bye-lane, but for a time neither of us noticed it. The snow was so high all across it that we had not seen that the snow-covered hedge had come to an end, and that we were where the opening of the road ought to be seen. In another road the snow spread right across it, and a path was being cut through it. The snow was so firm that there was no slope in the sides of the cutting. In many places it was 5 feet deep, but in this road the average depth was from 2 feet 6 inches to 3 feet. Our postman got up to his neck in the snow on Tuesday night in trying to get into Reading. . . . We have had no letters of later date than Tuesday—though we have seen Wednesday's newspaper. . . . Did Annie tell you that the gale drove the snow into most of our rooms, through the imperfect fittings of the windows? It never melted even in my study all the day. I did not meddle with it, for it kept out the wind. I have set up a screen and have moved my table so near the fire that I can poke it without getting up. Walter called it my 'hutch.'"

Although the sale of the Memoir of his uncle disappointed him, yet happily the *Letters of Gordon* met with a good reception, and ran through several editions.

Mrs. Birkbeck Hill kept always a careful account of all literary earnings. The Memoir brought him £190, Gordon £300, whereas by his first little essays on *Johnson, his Friends and his Critics*, he lost £3. Altogether, with books and reviewing, and by dint of hard and steady work, he made during his first years at Burghfield an average of £240 a year. It was not overpay, but he liked his work and was happy in the freedom of country life. His vein of humorous nonsense, too, seemed at this time to be inexhaustible, even unquenched by asthma. Much of it was poured forth in his weekly articles for the *Saturday Review*, or in droll letters to the *Pall Mall Gazette*. There was, however, plenty and to spare to joke over with the young folk, both his own children and the companions they brought about the pleasant house beneath the shade of the four tall Lombardy poplars. Of these whimsicalities most were made up on the moment and forgotten as soon; nevertheless, a few have passed into the region of family tradition. Of such is the following epitaph, supposed to have been found on a tombstone near Basingstoke, and which used to be solemnly chanted by the small children in the family with great effect.

EPITAPH ON A MR. TUBB.

When the last trump shall sound
 With a great rub-a-dub,
 I hope to be found
 A newly washed Tub.
 A newly washed Tub
 In oceans of grace,
 While Angels shall scrub
 Earth's stains from my face.

The second was a "Hymn of the Pharisees at the Last Day," and also went well to a slow, chanting

measure, with a slightly quickened movement in the congratulations of the pious in the second verse.

THE LAST DAY.

When first they heard the crack of doom,
Each saint took up a brand new broom,
And swept along each trembling sinner,
As crumbs are swept up after dinner,
And threw them all upon the fire,
So hot it made the saints perspire.

While round about them all the Good
With cheerful, pious faces stood,
And said, "Oh! now we are so glad
That when on earth we were not bad;
For sweeter far 'tis sure to see
Another burnt than burnt to be.

Although the *Life of Sir Rowland Hill* and the *Letters of Colonel Gordon from Central Africa* had drawn him away from the Johnsonian work which he had begun with his two first publications, yet Dr. Hill's researches in the eighteenth century had been going quietly forward. For his book on Gordon he had indeed found it needful to read extensively in African history and travels, but his Johnsonian reading and noting had also progressed. In the October of 1881 he found himself so convinced that a new edition of Boswell was needed, and that he himself might be no unworthy editor, that he wrote the following letter to his old tutor of Pembroke days, Professor Price, then Secretary to the Delegates of the Clarendon Press.

TO PROFESSOR PRICE.

“THE POPLARS, BURGHFIELD,

“October 28, 1881.

“For many years I have been collecting notes for an edition of Boswell’s *Life of Johnson*. They are at present only in rough form, and would require many months of steady labour before they could be brought into a state fit for publication.

“I believe that I could produce an edition not unworthy of the Clarendon Press. If the Delegates think fit to entertain the proposal, I will at greater length write to you on the subject, and describe the plan which I propose to pursue.

“I may be allowed to state, as a proof that I have that habit of accuracy which is almost the first quality which we look for in an editor, that in all the reviews which I have seen of my two last books, *The Life of Sir Rowland Hill* and *Colonel Gordon in Central Africa*, not a single error in a matter of fact has, so far as I know, been laid to my charge. Of the latter of these two works I have seen more than sixty reviews.”

The proposal was favourably received by the Delegates of the Clarendon Press, more especially by Professor Jowett, to whose steady encouragement Birkbeck Hill owed much. The edition of Macaulay’s *Essay*, proposed in the following letter, was never carried out, although Dr. Hill never lost an opportunity of exposing errors which he forgave all the less because he had a very real admiration for the good side in Macaulay’s work.

TO PROFESSOR PRICE.

“BURGHFIELD, *February* 13, 1882.

“Macaulay’s *Essay* on Croker’s edition of *Boswell* is frequently set as a subject in examinations. . . . The copyright of the *Essay* has expired, so that anyone can reprint it. In fact, it has been republished with notes. . . . I reviewed such a publication for the *Saturday Review* some years ago, and had to show in how blundering a way the editor had done his work.

“I had myself accumulated notes on this *Essay*, but since I have begun to work steadily at my edition of *Boswell* I have been able to add to them. No doubt they will grow the farther my work extends.

“I look on this *Essay* of Macaulay’s as a piece of very clever but very gross caricature. Macaulay himself, when he came to write his article on Johnson for the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, silently showed how much his opinion had changed; though even in this he falls into great errors.

“If the Delegates of the Clarendon Press approve, I shall be very glad, while I am working at my edition of *Boswell*, to prepare at the same time notes and an introductory chapter on this *Essay*. The best way of exposing Macaulay’s statements about Boswell and Johnson would be, in my opinion, to give as notes passages from these authors, or their contemporaries, which directly contradict what he asserts. Such extracts would be of no small service to the young student, not only as they would open up to him a wider range of reading, but also as they would lead him to question Macaulay’s statements in his more important

works. The more I read of him the more do I feel—with all my admiration for his great powers—how right was that critic who remarked that “the worst of Macaulay was that he was always so confoundedly cocksure of everything.”

CHAPTER VII

Death of his son Walter—Immortality a dream—Work the only help—Peace after storm—A winter in Corsica—Anecdotes of Thackeray and Turner—Delegates of the Clarendon Press and the proposed *Boswell*—Professor Jowett—His scheme for his *Boswell* described—The elections of 1885, 1886—A leader among the villagers—Extracts from a girl's diary—Village anecdotes.

THE Delegates of the Clarendon Press had hoped to bring out the new *Boswell* on the centenary of Johnson's death in 1885, and at first Birkbeck Hill both hoped and expected to be ready. But the work grew under his hands, and his chance of success would have been in any case small; as it was, sorrow and illness made it wholly out of the question. In the spring of 1882 died his son Walter. The link between the father and child had been always marked with a perfectness of sympathy as rare as it proved to be tragic. "His love for me seemed to rise from a spring that ran for ever. He never changed towards me as the years came on. I was not only his father but his dearest friend. Two drops of water did not more easily join into one than did our two spirits. And now I have to face life without him," wrote Birkbeck Hill soon after the child's death. For a long while he hoped to write some account of his son as a memory of a singularly lovable and original child, but though he had kept every minutest record, every letter in which the boy was mentioned, yet he never dared to face the task. Those who knew Dr. Hill well, knew also the peculiar

arrangement of his study, the little room within a room which he made for himself, of his writing desk, the solid oak desk William Morris had made him in 1863, of the reference bookcase, and of the great old sofa that dated from the days of Addison. The arrangement of furniture was always the same wherever he made his home. At Burghfield the sofa was never too littered with books, well littered though it generally was, to find a place for Walter. There the two read Cæsar together, and found it almost too exciting; there the child listened to *Paradise Lost*, and "liked best to go straight on." "I am up long before breakfast every morning," wrote his father, "and after a walk read *Paradise Lost* to Walter; it is surprising to see how eager he is for it. At night I read the *Faery Queen*. I fancy that Walter, when he is so much more careful in drying himself after his bath than boys usually are, is prolonging the reading. It is clear that it is not Spenser that is dry." Indeed, it is on record that Walter only once fell asleep over the evening reading of the *Faery Queen*, and that was during the "Chronicle of British Kings from Brute to Uthers Rayne," a lapse which could not have even vexed the author. Shakespeare's plays were thus read together, and *Don Quixote* and *Robinson Crusoe*; they never seemed to have any diverse taste in literature. But it was not only in books that the two met on common ground; in the garden and in the woods it was just the same; in quaint invented games full of rhymes and nonsense their sense of comradeship was never at fault; and when the father was perforce busy with his pen the child curled himself into the corner of the sofa close at hand, and drew endless series of pictures, where "Dizzy" played the part of Arch Fiend, and knights and giants warred in grand grotesque battle.

While his brothers went away to school or college, Walter stayed on at home. He was not in any way an ailing child, nor even a delicate one, although the extreme darkness of his hair and eyes and his excessively sensitive features gave this impression to those who did not know how sweet and sunny a life the child habitually led. At twelve his father, with deepest reluctance, sent him to school. Had he lived, his happy country life would not have prepared him for the world outside in older years, and neither his father nor mother wished to be selfish in their love. A year he passed at school, and was happy there. In his third term he died.

"How often," wrote his father four years later, "as I sit by the fireside does my eye sadly rest on the part of the floor—how well I remember it—where he quivered and danced with joy as he welcomed me home one winter evening, and clinging to me said in his loving voice and with his caressing ways—

‘And will I see him once again,
And will I hear him speak!
I’m downright dizzy at the thought,
In troth I’m like to greet.’

If only he shall see me again, and stands on the other shore of the dark water to welcome me! I then shall be the child and he the guide—old in the ways of heaven. But it is a dream."

The thought that immortality, intensely longed for, was yet but a dream was one which was constantly in his mind. One evening, after watching the soft dying of a beautiful spring day, he wrote :—

"How gorgeous is the heaven that man has framed for himself! But as I was watching the beautiful

clouds in the setting sun, it seemed to me that for man the sun had well-nigh set, and that the bright happy dreamland of the west is now for ever grey and cold. Should we not be happier if we had never been fed with the hopes of immortality and filled with all its longings? In that case perhaps we might sooner have grappled with life as it is and forced ourselves to resignation. We have been taught to long, to hope, trained in longing and hoping from our earliest childhood. Our feelings, our hearts are all one way, our cruel reason the other."

A year before thus writing, when the boy had been two years dead, he wrote: "I have been talking to-day with Lewin and C. J. Faulkner about God, the immortality of the soul, and religion. I hate such talks, for they always leave me unhappy. Truth first and above all things, even if it brings misery in its train. I will never try to comfort myself with what is false. Yet truth is very hard.

'We are such stuff as dreams are made of,
And our little life is rounded with a sleep.'

The courage which made him face his convictions, sad though they left him, was not enough to let the lost child's name cross his lips in talk with others, though he did at rare intervals write about him to his children. When alone by himself it was otherwise. In his study, over his garden plots, or when out on the hillside, those within hearing might constantly hear the name of Walter.

"He talks always of Walter," said his wife one day in 1902, while she was watching him at work in the garden, herself lying sick of her last weary illness; "he never speaks of him to me."

That his wife suffered from this silence he was not unaware, but he dared not face the physical collapse which the effort would have cost him.

"I do not know," he wrote to one of his children, "that I shall ever have strength enough to talk about Walter. It is not that the wish is wanting, but whenever I would begin I have to call to mind that my grief will injure my health, and that to injure my health is to cause trouble and suffering to your mother and all of you."

His fears were indeed only too well grounded. A long time of serious illness followed his son's death in 1882; the winter had again to be passed in the South of Europe, and for a time all work came to an end. Nevertheless, so soon as he was sufficiently recovered to hold a book and a pen again, it was in steady, monotonous work that he found his only refuge and his ultimate salvation.

On March 26, 1890, he wrote: "In constant work and by the beneficent action of time I have at last found peace and comfort and happiness. Yet I have still to keep a watch over my mind. But I can never dwell long on the thought of life and death without such sad thoughts breaking in upon me as warn me to turn my mind to work. No unhappy man should ever read unhappy books. It is eight years to-day since I lost Walter, and I have found peace."

Peace after bitter storm was all he sought, but happily the years brought him healing. The little company of his grandchildren growing in happy childhood around him brought him fresh interest and affection; and for the little grandson, who shared his last home at Hampstead, he once more dreamed a fair future, with him once more played the old nonsense games, for him once more let the study door always open to a

childish voice and knock. The last entry which he wrote in a little record of his own boy tells of this grandson, who bore his own name of Norman. It was written on March 26, 1901.

“On my return home little Norman ran eagerly to welcome me. His father and mother were out. He and Baby played about the room. Then I went to my study to work; but half an hour before his bedtime the thought of my lost darling made me go down to him, for I knew he would be missing his father and mother. I liked to think that my lost boy's love was still living, and giving my dear little grandson half an hour's happiness. I am thankful once more that I have found peace.”

Occasionally letters in after years mention Walter; rare, nevertheless, though such mention be, it should not be forgotten that from the year 1882 Birkbeck Hill was a man who lived with a deep and abiding sorrow, a sorrow which by its effect on his health profoundly modified both his life and that of his family.

For the first year after his loss he was unable to take up his work, but after a summer spent mostly in his sickroom, he was well enough to be moved to Ajaccio, in Corsica. Ajaccio in 1882 was a much more primitive place than it has since become, and the great novelty as well as beauty of the place was of much service to both Dr. and Mrs. Hill. They were happy enough, too, to make pleasant and lasting friendships among the small community of sunshine-seeking travellers. Of these friends the most valued were Dr. Findlater, General Cadell of Cockenzie, and Colonel and Frau von Sydow. With Dr. Findlater they crossed

the island to Bastia, following Boswell in imagination ; in those days the journey was something of a feat for a very old man, as was Dr. Findlater, an invalid, and a lady, but they had every reason to be pleased with as well as proud of their little journey. With Dr. Findlater Birkbeck Hill had many interesting talks. Among those unhappily forgotten he recorded the following in a letter to his son Leonard :—

“ AJACCIO, *January 3, 1883.*

“ My old Scotch friend, Dr. Findlater, told me the other day that he had once travelled for a few days with Thackeray. Thackeray told him that he had seen on a German bookstall many of his works in the Tauchnitz edition. He asked the bookseller whether he sold many copies of that author's works. ‘ Yes,’ the man answered, ‘ but not so many as of the works of Botz. Kennen Sie Botz ? ’ You may perhaps remember that Dickens published his earlier works under the name of ‘ Boz.’ Dr. Findlater's bedroom was just opposite Thackeray's in an hotel in which they were lodging. Thackeray had gone down, and the chambermaid was making his bed. He had been reading Strauss' *Life of Jesus*—a very heretical book indeed—and had left it by the bed-head. She had picked it up, and seeing the title thought that it was some very pious work. Dr. Findlater heard her call out to a fellow-servant, ‘ What a Christ-like man the gentleman must be ! Look at the book that he has been reading.’ As they, Dr. Findlater and Thackeray, were sitting at a café in Vienna, someone said, ‘ There is Baron —.’ ‘ Ah ! ’ said Thackeray, looking at him, ‘ that man had a great deal of my pluckings.’ The Baron was a gambler, who had helped to pluck Thackeray when he was young,

just as Deuceace had plucked the silly fellow in the *Jeames Papers*."

General Cadell, too, had many a good story to tell his friend. One concerning Turner was told in a letter to his second daughter, who was then a student at the Slade School of Art.

"AJACCIO, *February 3*.

"I have a little anecdote about Turner which will interest you. We have made the acquaintance of a General Cadell, a man of about sixty years. When he was seven, Turner, when out on a sketching tour in Scotland, visited his father. He made a rapid pencil sketch of Arthur's Seat, and then turning to the lad said roughly, 'Boy, what do you think of that?' The boy answered, 'You have made Arthur's Seat too high.' Turner at first glared at him as if he would eat him up, and then, after looking at the sketch, said, 'Boy, you are right.' He set to work again, and very soon corrected the error. The General was very much more struck by Turner's roughness than by his humility, but that is the way of the world in judging of great men."

On his return to Burghfield in the spring of 1883 Birkbeck Hill set once again steadily to work at his *Boswell*. It is true that he was obliged to winter abroad again, but he took his books with him, and let neither asthma nor depression hinder his progress. From a letter written to Professor Price on December 18, 1883, it is also clear that making notes for his edition of *Boswell* was not the only task he set himself. For the sake of the family income, reviewing had also to go steadily on.

TO PROFESSOR PRICE.

“SAN REMO, ITALY,

“ December 18, 1883.

“I am sending by this post a long letter and notes to the Master of Balliol, whose kindness I deeply feel in offering me his counsel. I am working very hard at my edition. . . . One thing that has delayed me has been the need I have been under to earn money by writing for the Press. You could not, naturally enough, undertake to print my *Boswell* till you had seen my work, and I could not afford to give all my time to it. Perhaps, on Professor Jowett's report of the specimen I send, the Delegates may be enabled to arrive at a decision. If I feel sure that my book will be printed I will make a present sacrifice in hope of future gain—still more in hope of seeing a work brought out to which I have for so many years given so much thought and labour.

“I think it very hard that you should require me to return Professor Jowett's letter. It would have made a most valuable addition to my Johnsonian and Boswellian collection, and I yet hope that you will let me have it.”

In the winter of 1884 Mr. Napier's edition of *Boswell* appeared. In answer to some apprehensions on the part of the Delegates of the Clarendon Press, Birkbeck Hill wrote his reasons for believing that competition need not be feared. The edition which he aimed at making was one which he certainly hoped would rank as the classical edition, but it was not, for that very reason, likely to compete with a shorter and cheaper book. The question of the Diary of Dr. T. Campbell is

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treated at length in a note on p. 338, vol. ii. of the Oxford edition of *Boswell*. At times Birkbeck Hill has been accused of running riot in the matter of notes. The letter to Mr. Lyttelton Gell, dated July 14, 1885, shows his own view of the matter.

"SAN REMO, *March* 7, 1884.

"I had noticed the review of Napier's edition in the *Times*; nevertheless, in spite of the praise bestowed on it—by a writer who was not very familiar with the subject—I have not much dread of his rivalry. . . . His edition—as some of the advertisements have stated, for I have not seen it—is based on Croker's, though he has restored the text. Croker's is a very bad foundation on which to build, for though he had gathered together much interesting information about Johnson and Boswell from their contemporaries, yet he was utterly incapable of understanding the mind of either one man or the other.

"Mr. Napier follows Croker in gathering into one volume Johnsoniana. What I am doing—as the specimen of my notes seen by Professor Jowett shows—is there to quote each one of these Johnsoniana where it illustrates the text. At the same time I quote passages from Johnson's own writings wherever they bear on the text. I have got such a familiarity with the book and with the whole subject from the study of many years that I can illustrate it in a way that has never yet been attempted. Most certainly my notes will be unlike any that have been as yet published. It is very easy for anyone to gather into one volume passages from the works of Hannah More and Mme. d'Arblay. But a man must know his *Boswell* well who can quote them just there where they throw light on some

passage. . . . My attempt is so to edit Boswell that the edition may be held not unworthy of one of the greatest of our classical writers. To gather notes for it has been my favourite occupation for many years. I care not what trouble it may cost me to render my work thorough. . . . I see that Mr. Napier's edition contains the Diary of Dr. T. Campbell. This book Professor Jowett suspects is a forgery. I have tried in vain to get a copy of it. If it is a forgery I have little doubt that I shall be able to detect it. I do not know whether the book can be borrowed from the Bodleian. I fear not. Had I been in England I should have had Napier's edition to review for the *Saturday Review* had I cared to do so."

" 33A HIGH ST., OXFORD,

" July 14, 1885.

"It may perhaps be well that I should say a word or two in defence of the extent of my annotations. Boswell on his title-page calls his great work not only the 'Life of Johnson,' but also 'A View of Literature and Literary Men in Great Britain for nearly Half a Century.' This view I have attempted to illustrate quite as much as the Life. What was understood by the men for whom he wrote is now in very many cases very obscure. His book affords an admirable opportunity for bringing back much of the thoughts and doings of the last century. How strong an interest is taken in that time is shown by the great success of Croker's edition. He has made great interpolations and has added copious notes—notes that are sometimes interesting, but very often impertinent and ridiculous, and no less often incorrect. Nevertheless, the editor of the Croker Correspondence, which was published last

winter, says that of his editions 40,000 to 50,000 copies have been sold.

"Forster's *Life of Goldsmith* is swollen by notes—interesting and accurate generally. It had reached a fifth edition many years ago.

"In my notes I have aimed at giving what will be read with pleasure. I have not followed Croker in expressing my opinions, but have been content with examining difficult questions, and with quoting passages that bore on the text. I believe that I have gathered a mass of interesting information that lies scattered through some hundreds of books which are scarcely ever read. I have cleared up a great many difficulties."

His growing absorption in his *Boswell* did much to restore Birkbeck Hill's health, but the work was still far too often done as a means of deadening memory. Happily in the autumn of 1885 a new interest once more awoke in him some of his old eagerness, something like hope, for others, at least, if not for himself. On February 14, 1886, he wrote: "I have been working hard in the Election, and working with eagerness that at last kindled into a fire that burnt hot within me. This was very good for my peace of mind. I know I have been much more peaceful, and even happier."

The circumstances in which the General Election of 1885 placed him were somewhat peculiar. The family at the Poplars were all keen politicians and keen Liberals. Their richer neighbours—more especially the landed gentry around—were almost all Conservatives. The villagers, on the other hand, in that part of the large and very scattered parish of Burghfield which lay nearest to Birkbeck Hill's house, welcomed

the extension of the County Franchise with an intense and enthusiastic joy and in the most radical of spirits. Nor was this feeling confined to the dwellers on the commons, although the greater freedom of position which they enjoyed made them much more outspoken than their fellow-labourers in other villages. There was, in fact, something unusual in these Burghfield men, something of the shrewdness and humour of a North countryman, often tempered with a deep religious fervour. A tradition of gipsy blood perhaps correctly accounted for the keener temperament and thin and swarthy faces so often noticeable among these people; wild as gipsies they too often were as lads and girls. Two generations before, their forbears had squatted on the wild common lands, and some of their descendants still inhabited the mud-built cottages and tilled the fertile little gardens made by their grandfathers. For these holdings a merely nominal quit-rent was paid to the squire of the parish—happily for Burghfield, a most just and upright man in all his dealings with the villagers. Divergence of political views, however, kept him apart from the labourers, and when the Election on the new basis of Franchise came, the people seemed to be without a teacher and a leader to whom they could look with confidence.

It was the need of these village men which lighted the "fire that burnt hot within me," in Birkbeck Hill's words. Careful invalid habits, by which he had intended to safeguard himself against an English winter, were forgotten in the growing excitement of the Election; night air and crowded rooms were risked, long drives to distant meetings braved, where he spoke with the old ringing voice and deep earnestness which had once so often moved his boys at Bruce Castle. Happily in the candidate before the

electors, Birkbeck Hill found a man for whom he could work with hearty respect. In Mr. George Palmer, of Marlston and Reading, he found that high integrity and perfect simplicity which were in his eyes the best foundations of character. In Mr. Palmer they were most happily blended with sound, shrewd sense and deep kindness of nature.

One of Birkbeck Hill's children kept a diary during the two General Elections of 1885, 1886, and the time of excitement which both preceded and followed them. Much cannot be expected from the diary of a girl scarce out of her teens, and decidedly more full of enthusiasm than knowledge; nevertheless, the two following extracts may serve to show what was the sort of place Birkbeck Hill had made for himself among the village folk in spite, almost in defiance, of scholarly habits, ill-health, and abiding sorrow. The first is one of many descriptions of village meetings during the autumn of 1885.

"November 1, 1885.—It was a densely dark, drizzly night, and we had a nine-mile drive before us through the fir woods and commons. The coachman knew nothing of the road, but luckily Father and I knew it like A B C right through the woods. Before every turn I called out directions, but three times it was so dark in the woods that the coachman missed the turn in spite of my warning. The forest was very wonderful; the straight fir trunks stood out white, as the lamps flashed on them, like marble pillars in a mighty cathedral. It was a grand meeting, that little country schoolhouse packed with labouring men. Father made a very fine appeal to the men, telling them their new power of the Franchise was but a new duty, and bringing before them the awful responsibility of England in

all her vast possessions. He kept them entirely quiet while his voice rang so clearly through the room; and a great sigh went through the audience as he ended, showing how he had moved them."

The second extract is dated Midsummer 1886. Between the two Elections had occurred the Home Rule split in the Liberal party. The family at the Poplars and their village friends were all ardent Home Rulers. The views of the villagers were doubtless crude, but they were at any rate sincere. The girl's diary sums them up in a speech she noted down, made by some worthy in the neighbourhood. "And why shouldn't th' Irish have their own way, to be sure? We all loikes our own way. God bless my soul, give th' Irish their own way and they'll be loike—loike—why, God bless my soul, loike turtle doves. But if so be as they be treated as they have abeen, why, God bless my soul, there'll be the old Gooseberry to pay, and that's all about it."

But ardent as the village might be to record a Home Rule vote, there was no candidate forthcoming. Dr. Hill was himself asked to stand, but eager as he was he well knew that neither his health nor his purse could stand the strain. The votes which had been given with so much pride and hope in the winter had perforce to remain useless in the summer. To the village politicians it was a veritable tragedy. There was, too, another regret in their minds.

The family at the Poplars—with whom they had become such good friends over common work and common interests—were about to leave the village. At the time their absence was spoken of only as a year of travel, but it proved in the event to be a parting with no return. Before leaving a gathering took place

which the girl's diary describes—a farewell to the village, which was unconsciously a farewell to much else too, for a chapter in life lay closed when the sun set on that summer day.

“*June 27, 1886.*—As we have no contest we are going to give a farewell tea-party this evening to the now useless Election Committee. We have called on nearly everyone on the Common this week. They all ‘pray God you’ll enj’y your healths in furreign parts, and mind you be back again, for we shall miss you no mistake.’ It is so strange to think how nine years ago we came here strangers, new-comers among our rich neighbours; Father has now far more influence with the labourers than any other man about, and the Tories can dislike but they can’t ignore him. How changed is this place, too! The garden is full of roses and pinks, sunshine and sweet scents. How changed in nine years from the glaring gravel-pathy place it used to be! Now we have little shady nooks and flowery corners all about, and the turf is firm springy turf, instead of a neglected hayfield full of idiotic flower-beds. . . .

“Our tea-party is over. We laid the tables in the shade of the young chestnut and the plum tree, and set them with bright cups and brass trays, bowls of roses, and of course a jar of Sweet William for the G. O. M. We did not let the maids have any trouble, as it was Sunday—for the men, of course, couldn’t come any other day. We enjoyed it very much; there was no stiffness or awkward pauses, but having placed the men in groups they chatted very easily. Suddenly Mr. Streek got up and said, ‘I should like to say a few words for myself and my fellow working men. We would like to say how we thank you all for the sympathy you have shown us working men, and tell

you what a difference you have made to us all. And we should like to thank the Doctor for what he has done for us, for we know he has worked hard, not for his good, but because he felt for us working men. And I should like to tell him how it has helped us to see him humbly serving us to be our leader. Well, I pray God we may meet again, and when you comes back I'm thinking I'd like to sing in my rough way, "Welcome Home, Welcome Home."'"

CHAPTER VIII

Publication of Boswell's *Johnson*—A famous Index—Decision to settle in Oxford—A family "who have heard too much of Johnson"—Discovery of eighty letters of Hume—Love of gardening—Professor Morfill and Sir John Burdon Sanderson—The *Via Boasia*—Marriage of his elder daughter—Protection—Mr. Healy—The Johnson Club—"Birrell, the *Obiter Dicta* man"—Letter from Leslie Stephen—Lord Rosebery and the Hume Letters—A great Johnsonian discovery.

IN the June of 1886 Birkbeck Hill and his family left their garden at Burghfield, left their roses and their windy meadow and the deep quiet of the fir woods, and settled themselves into lodgings in Holywell, Oxford. His *Boswell* was at the time passing through the Clarendon Press, and proximity to a great library had become a necessity to an editor who verified every quotation. In the meantime he let his house at Burghfield to his brother-in-law, Sir John Scott, with every intention of returning there at the end of the year.

Soon after settling in Oxford Birkbeck Hill began the Index to his *Boswell*, an Index of which Mr. G. K. Fortescue once said to one of Dr. Hill's children, "It is the finest Index ever made, for Dr. Birkbeck Hill was the first man of first-class power who ever thought it worth while to do an Index, and it will never be equalled."

Whether this opinion will prove true or no—*for ever* is a long day—the making of that Index was a very arduous task. How much he found it strain

his powers can be seen in the following letter to Mr. Lyttelton Gell, then Secretary to the Clarendon Press. The editing of *Boswell* joined with the heavy expenses of starting his boys in the world, and his own ill-health, which so often obliged him to winter abroad, had put a severe strain on the family income.

For the last three years of the life at Burghfield this strain had been lessened by the exertions of his wife and daughters, who had undertaken the care and education of five little children whose parents lived abroad. Four of the children were the sons and daughters of Mrs. Hill's brother, John Scott, the other the child of an old friend of Bruce Castle days. Dear as all these children were to Mrs. Hill, yet the work was anxious, and at times almost too much for her strength.

Some of the credit of Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell* should certainly fall to his wife's share.

TO MR. LYTTELTON GELL.

"HAMPSTEAD, *October* 18, 1886.

"By my agreement with the Delegates of the Clarendon Press I am, as you are aware, to receive 60 per cent. of any profit that may be made on my edition of *Boswell*. I am willing to believe that it is neither unreasonable nor unbecoming in me to ask that I may receive some payment in advance. When I undertook my task and entered into my engagement I did not fully know how much there still remained for me to do. I had for many years been preparing for this edition, and had carefully noted the *Life of Johnson* throughout. But when I began to write out my notes I found that there was a great deal more to

do than I had expected. Fresh knowledge showed fresh ignorance, and one path tracked out to the end sometimes opened up many more.

"When the correction of the press began, I felt that it was a duty not to trust to my copy, but in each case to verify my quotations by referring once more to the originals. This caused me a great deal of labour and some expense, for I had from time to time to go up to London, so that I might consult at the British Museum those books which I had not in my own library.

"I have given up almost my whole time for the last three years to this work. At one time I made very considerable earnings by writing for the newspapers and the magazines. This year I have done nothing but review three books, which were sent to me in the winter at a time when the proof sheets were not coming in very fast, and in the two previous years I did very little outside my work at *Boswell*. I can hardly expect to have finished with my Index and Preface before the middle or end of December, and then I must take a long rest before I shall be fit for work. I have not taken any holiday, not even the shortest, for more than a year and a half.

"The Index which I undertook to make would be, I knew, a heavy piece of work, but it is costing me much more labour than I had anticipated. By the time that it is printed I shall have given it full four months' close attention, even though I have been much aided by members of my family.

"I can truly say that in order to render my book worthy both of its subject and the Clarendon Press I have devoted to it far more labour than I should have done had I been guided only by the dictates of prudence."

In Mrs. Birkbeck Hill's account of her husband's literary earnings, the profits arising from the first four years of sale of the *Boswell* are entered as being £320. This included the advance granted by the Delegates, and also the £100 which Messrs. Harper consented, after pressure, to pay for the simultaneous edition which they published in America. This £320 remained the bulk of his payment for his many years' work.

During these months spent in lodgings in Oxford a resolution to leave Burghfield for good and all was taken. Many reasons contributed to this decision. The welcome which Dr. Hill had met with, both from old friends and new, made the life in Burghfield seem lonely in contrast.

The home there had been a happy one for the young people to grow up in, but in 1886 they were no longer children. The two elder sons were already but rare visitors; the third, Leonard, was beginning his scientific career as a student at University College, London; even the youngest was about to be articled to the Brighton Railway Company. The party thus dwindled, was also likely soon to lose the elder daughter as a result of her engagement to Mr. W. J. Ashley, then a Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford. It was abundantly clear that some smaller and less lonely home must be found, and where could this be done with fairer promise of happiness than in Oxford, the city of books, of beauty, and of friends?

In the early summer of 1887, after spending some months in Switzerland, Dr. and Mrs. Hill and their two daughters returned to England, to break up the old home and find themselves a new one.

The first letter written after their return is the following one to Mr. Doble, of the Clarendon Press, a friend for whom Birkbeck Hill already felt a strong

liking and esteem, which grew, with better knowledge, into the warmest affection.

For sympathy in his Johnsonian work he had to go to such friends as Mr. Doble, for it must be confessed that his family was shockingly lacking both in learning and enthusiasm. Probably, however, a family which had heard Johnson and Boswell talked from their childhood, which had copied innumerable extracts, and helped to sort an interminable Index, could not reasonably be expected to be enthusiastic Johnsonians. Anyhow, their shortcomings, if sighed over, were at least leniently judged, and it did not affect the family harmony, nor even a father's partial view of his daughter's merits.

TO MR. DOBLE.

"June 7, 1887.

"We were all greatly pleased at hearing of the Delegates' proposal to Lucy [that she should edit *Rasselas*]. It is a great compliment to the young lady. She has, however, written to Mr. York Powell to tell him that she cannot undertake the Preface. A knowledge of human nature would have convinced the Delegates that those of my children who had brains enough to write would be sure *not* to be Johnsonians. Lucy takes no interest in my great man; she has heard too much of him. She is too ardent in her feelings to *get up* a subject, and too truthful to attempt to write about what she does not understand.

"I should be sorry that the Preface to *Rasselas* should be ill-done, and if the Delegates approve will do it myself. I do not know what payment they were going to offer Lucy, but whatever it was I shall be

content with it. I should like to show my gratitude for the handsome and generous way in which they have treated me. . . . We have not yet taken a house, but are in treaty about No. 3 The Crescent. The landlord has the fault of the Dutch,

‘Giving too little and asking too much.’”

While negotiations for the house in The Crescent, which he ultimately concluded to his satisfaction, were pending, Birkbeck Hill went up to Hampstead to visit his aunt, Miss Maurice. There, in the little house which she had inhabited since his father’s death in 1884, he met with one of the purest pleasures which can befall a literary man. His joy over the discovery of eighty unpublished letters of Hume’s was great—how far his intense interest in all that belonged to the eighteenth century was removed from the public taste was most abundantly shown by the extremely small sale of these same letters when published by the Clarendon Press. But questions of public taste neither diminished the value of the letters nor his joy in his discovery.

TO MR. DOBLE.

“*June 12, 1887.*

“I wish that you and Mr. Madan could be in this pleasant little room this blessed Sunday in June, with the eighty unpublished letters of David Hume that lie before me, many of wonderful interest, not to mention a letter of Adam Smith, two from Hugh Blair, two from Strahan, and five from Hume’s brother and nephew. They have been lent me by Mr. Barker, who was so obliging about the Johnson autographs, who is, I find, a dealer, a very intelligent and pleasant

one, and worthy of one of the gentlest of crafts. I called on him yesterday, and he at once offered to lend me all the letters. He gives me leave to copy extracts for my notes; should I ever arrive at a new edition, they will much enrich it.

"But can we not do more with this noble collection, between the Clarendon Press and the Bodleian? Mr. Barker thinks that the collection ought to be sold as a whole. Unhappily the first owner, of whom he bought them, sold a few letters at the great sale of last July. He is a descendant of Strahan, or of Strahan's partner. Still the bulk of the collection remains, and very likely access could be had to these few. Mr. Barker asks £200 for the collection, which does not seem to me excessive. If the public is not an ass beyond what I think possible, a considerable profit ought to be made by the publication. I should delight to edit them, for they touch constantly on matters with which I am familiar. Could not they be purchased by the Bodleian and brought out by the Clarendon Press; the Press paying back to the Bodleian what it made on the sale. It is a fine chance for dear old Bodley. Do what you can. I am sure that Mr. Madan will do what he can. Cannot the Jubilee be turned on this collection?

"When I say that they are unpublished I ought to mention that I have here no access to books. Still, I have no recollection of having seen any of the letters quoted. . . . Mr. Fortescue of the British Museum has written me a very pleasant letter, and so has Andrew Lang, though a very brief one."

TO MR. LYTTELTON GELL.

“ OXFORD, *November* 10, 1887.

“ Mr. Doble has informed you that I am proposing to edit some unpublished correspondence of David Hume. . . . I saw at once how important it was that they should not be sold piecemeal before they had been edited. I applied to the British Museum and the Bodleian, but was told that both institutions were too poor to give £200 for them—which was the sum asked. . . . I fortunately happened to mention the subject to the Master of Balliol. He advised me to apply to the Earl of Rosebery. . . . By his generosity the letters are secured. I have them with me, and have begun to work upon them. I find them, on looking at them again, quite as interesting as my recollection led me to think.

“ They are peculiarly interesting as forming a series, all of those written by Hume, that is to say, written to one person. . . . William Strahan, Hume’s correspondent, was the King’s printer, the ancestor of the Spottiswoodes. He was a friend of Johnson, and of many literary men, and also for many years a Member of Parliament. He had some literary skill, and as I have shown in my *Boswell* (vol. v. p. 92, *n.* 3) corrected Robertson’s *Scotticisms*. In one of these letters Hume writes to him: ‘ I cannot forbear giving you many a hearty thanks both for your submitting to so troublesome a method of printing, and for the many useful corrections you have sent me. I suppose since the days of Aldus, Reuchlin, and Stephens there have been no printers who could have been useful to their authors in this particular.’

“ Hume discusses with him many of the literary matters of the day, such as Macpherson’s *Ossian* and

Rousseau's quarrel with Hume. He writes also to him on political matters in a most interesting way. Both men were Tories, but Hume was strongly opposed to the war with America. In some of his letters he writes with the greatest force about the folly of continuing it. There is a curious letter by Hutton the Moravian, which shows that after Hume's death he borrowed some of these letters and showed them to George III.

"Hume's hatred of the English is often shown in this correspondence, for to Strahan he could write openly as being a brother Scot. Johnson's jokes against the Scotch sink into insignificance when compared with Hume's violence.

"I might instance many other interesting matters, but I must not take up too much of your time. . . . I think that I could have the letters ready for the press in three months, or four at latest.

"If the Delegates will bring out the volume I shall be greatly pleased, and so will Lord Rosebery, as his letter shows."

By the date of this second letter Dr. and Mrs. Birkbeck Hill had settled into their new home. There was room in it for Dr. Hill's books, and a wee strip of garden for him to tend. In the time of his greatest sorrow he wrote: "I am gardening a great deal, and once more taking pleasure in my plants, and in the thought of the beauty I am providing for the spring and summer. As I garden my thoughts are never far from Walter. I think, too, that should I die my flowers for a season or two will speak of me to those who love me. In my garden and my study, among my books, may those who miss me seek me." Without some small spot to keep beautiful he would have been sadly lost; his garden plot at No. 3 The Crescent gave him

happiness out of all proportion to its size. What, however, was lost in spacious surroundings was more than made up by the many new interests which life in Oxford brought him. For a man so essentially a *friendly* man, for a man who so delighted in "good talk," to use a phrase of Johnson's of which he was fond, Burghfield had been too remote from congenial society. Writing in 1882 of De Tocqueville, he said, "How fortunate he was in his friends! He had two or three to whom he could open his heart and his mind in all their depth and breadth. Such a friend I have never been able to find." And again, on the subject of conversation, he says: "It ought to be taught as one of the chief duties of life that each one is bound so to train and store his mind that he may take his part in pleasant and general talk. 'Thou shalt not bore thy neighbour' might well be added to the Commandments."

Of "good talk" Birkbeck Hill found plenty, in pleasant, friendly Common Rooms, in his daily paces round the Parks, above all in the Sunday meetings in the house or shady garden of Mr. Morfill. Exclusively student of the eighteenth century as Birkbeck Hill more and more tended to become, yet his friendships were made among men of the most varied interests. Sir John Burdon Sanderson, late Regius Professor of Medicine, and Mr. Morfill, Reader *in* Slavonic, and reader *of* most other languages and literatures, were equally his warm and intimate friends. Those who lived with him knew well how keen was his delight in the vast reading and amazing memory of Professor Morfill, how tender his feeling for the beautiful character of Sir John Burdon Sanderson. Perhaps the time when "good talk" proved a most welcome change from Burghfield solitude was during his afternoon walk, and at this

time his best liked companion was undoubtedly the late Rev. C. W. Boase, Fellow of Exeter and Reader in Foreign History. There, on the sunny cross walk below the cricket field, the two generally met, so generally indeed that Birkbeck Hill named it, for himself, the "Via Boasia"; and when once a Long Vacation left him solitary, took to rhyming to while away the tedium of his walk.

THE VIA BOASIA IN THE LONG VACATION OF 1890.

Along the pleasant Boasian way
My lonely footsteps often stray;
The Boasian way no longer knows
The footsteps of the pleasant Boase.
The only beaux that down it pass
Are those who wait each on a lass,
Or bows that pretty lasses wear
Of ribands in their bonny hair.
And sometimes bows would catch my eye
That sun and rain breed in the sky;
The Via Boasia is the place
Which rainbows most delight to grace.
But these all add unto my woes,
For they recall the absent Boase.

And it was there, on the sunny cross walk, that Mr. Boase told a story which was ever after a favourite one with Birkbeck Hill—how, when a certain Fellow took a living, he, as entitled, took also a quantity of port wine, only the newly made rector chose it all of the year 1847, and cleared out that special bin. "Now," added Mr. Boase, "an agnostic would not have done that, you know."

These first years at Oxford were busy ones in every way, excellent for the recovery of Birkbeck Hill's health and spirits. The amount of work which he achieved was indeed something for a delicate man to be proud of. His *Boswell* appeared in 1887; the little *Rasselas*,

which had been offered to his daughter, followed in the same year; in 1888 he edited the *Traveller*, the *Letters of Hume*, and a small selection of Johnson's writings and sayings, under the title of *Wit and Wisdom of Dr. Johnson*. In 1890 there appeared a long and very carefully written account of Scotland at the time of Johnson's tour there, called *Footsteps of Dr. Johnson*. He also contributed occasionally to the *Speaker*, and finally active preparations were in progress for the collecting and editing of *Johnson's Letters*, a book which appeared in 1892.

All this literary work did not deaden his interest in politics. And in these years of Home Rule contests, of the Parnell Commission, and of the disclosure of the Pigott forgeries, interest in politics rose often to fever heat. How keen was Birkbeck Hill's feeling is shown in many a glowing passage to his elder daughter in her distant home in America.

For the hope that a home in Oxford would secure the near neighbourhood of their daughter Margaret after her marriage had not been fulfilled. In the summer of 1888 Mr. W. J. Ashley accepted the Chair of Economics in the University of Toronto, and he and his wife sailed for Canada soon after their marriage in the July of that year. What letters could do to bridge the separation was certainly done, for scarce a week went by during all the years of her absence without its intimate interchange of thought and news. For the last fourteen years of his life these letters of Birkbeck Hill to his daughter Margaret Ashley form a most faithful and minute insight into all his sayings and doings, and what is of still more value, of all his thoughts.

The first of the long series here printed is dated from Oxford on November 24, 1888.

TO MRS. ASHLEY.

“ OXFORD, *November 24*, 1888.

“Protection I look upon as only second to conquest in the misery and hatred of races which it causes. It is organised selfishness on the very largest scale, selfishness which though it spreads suffering far and wide, happily causes the most to the nation which practises it. . . . Last night I received a letter from Sampson Low & Co., asking me to do the literary part of a Fine Art volume illustrative of places connected with Dr. Johnson. They ask me what payment I should ask for. — thinks they ought to pay me a pound a page. If I could get this I should be well satisfied. It is something to be sought by a publisher.

“I have lately read with great interest Jeremy Bentham’s Life. The part which is interesting is that which is written by himself or is the report of his talk. The account of his childhood and his life at Oxford is very curious. I wish that I had seen it before I edited Boswell and Hume, as it throws a great deal of light on the men and the life and thought of last century. I should like to write an Essay on him, but to do it properly I should have to read his writings, for which I have not much appetite. Virtuous though he was, and a great benefactor to mankind, yet it is impossible to like him, much less to love him. Nevertheless, his character is to me full of interest. I see in it the cradle, as it were, of so much that I have seen in my relations. He cared nothing for poetry or painting, though he did for music; nevertheless, he had as a child imagination enough to be scared by the thought of ghosts. His contempt of the American Declaration of Independence, because it is untrue, contrasts in a

very striking way with the admiration of the men of the school of Rousseau."

"OXFORD, *December 8, 1888.*

"The other evening I heard Mr. Healy speak in the Common Room of Jesus College at a meeting of the Russell Club—an excellent speech, of great ability and moderation. My only regret was that it was not spoken in the Corn Exchange and that there were no reporters present. He gave a sketch of the foundation of the Parnellite Party and of their change of feeling towards England, showing how for a long time they had thought that there was nothing that could be got from either party but by compulsion, and how they had been won over by Mr. Gladstone's great measure. He produced a great effect on his hearers, and I feel sure won over some of them, for there were Liberal Unionists among them. I was much struck by the strong, thoughtful faces among the men—the best set I had seen in Oxford. Mr. Healy slept at Mr. Firth's, and I walked back with him as far as the turning to Norham Road. His face is as un-English as possible. Professor Rhys says that it belongs to the Iberian race, found in the west of Europe generally. I do not know that it is a face which gave me any strong feeling of confidence, yet there was nothing in it that was bad. His manner was courteous, though perhaps a little cold. His pronunciation and language were good, and also his matter and arrangement."

The winter of 1888 brought Birkbeck Hill into a fresh company, whose cordial welcome he most warmly appreciated. He was elected a member of the Johnson Club in London, and asked to read a paper at one of

their famous supper meetings. The subject he chose was "Dr. Johnson as a Radical," and it was one which gave full scope both to his humour and his learning. Of the Johnson Club he was twice chosen Prior and once Sub-Prior, and was not a little proud to be a "second Dick Whittington"; though he threatened to hang the member of the Club who proposed his second election "as a traitor to the Constitution." Happily the member in question, Mr. Ernest Radford, escaped all penalties for his friendly act, and the twice elected Prior accepted office quite cheerfully, even if unconstitutionally.

TO HIS WIFE.

"HAMPSTEAD,

"December 14, 1888.

"I wish that you and Lucy could have been present last night and witnessed my scene of triumph. I was indeed most nobly welcomed. The Scribe told me with sympathetic pride that the Correspondent of the *New York Herald* had asked leave to attend, as he wished to telegraph my paper out to America!!! as well as the discussion. There were some very good speeches made in the discussion that followed, especially one by a Mr. Whale, a solicitor, who spoke remarkably well and with great knowledge of his *Boswell*. He said that he preferred to call it, not Johnson's radical side but his humanitarian side. Mr. Birrell, the *Obiter Dicta* man, also spoke very well. He is a clever fellow. He was equally complimentary. He maintained in opposition to Mr. Whale that radical was the right term, and in fact that radicalism and humanitarianism were the same. Many of them said what a light the paper had thrown on Johnson's character.

One gentleman came up and congratulated me on the very delicate way in which I had handled so difficult a subject and had not given offence to the Liberal Unionists and Tories present. Edmund Gosse, by whom I sat, was most friendly, and called the paper a wonderful *tour de force*, referring to the way in which I had linked Johnson's sayings. He asked me to visit him some day at Trinity College, Cambridge, and assured me of a hearty welcome. It is no wonder that what with the supper and the smoke, I did not get to sleep till after two. Among the guests was the great Bonner, the Australian cricketer, whose health had been drunk with that of the other visitors, and his praise sounded at having hit some balls over the pavilion at Lord's. With great simplicity he said that after seeing the way in which Johnson's memory was revered he would much rather have been such a man than have gained his own greatest triumphs in cricket. He did not say it jocularly at all."

TO MRS. ASHLEY.

"OXFORD, *December 22*, 1888.

"Leslie Stephen has written to me a very kind letter about my Hume's *Letters*. He says: 'I was inclined to say before I had read them that you had rather overlaid your originals with annotations, but as I found the annotations very interesting I was good enough to forgive you, and even to admit that my view was a mistake.' He adds that he read 'with as fault-finding an eye as he could—the miserable small results are on the scraps enclosed.' Lord Rosebery tells me that he has bought a copy for reading, as the beautifully bound one sent to him by the Delegates is

too noble for use. He congratulates me 'on the completion of an excellent piece of work.' The first review I saw was not over favourable. It was in the *Manchester Guardian*. The writer speaks very highly of my knowledge, literary ardour, and industry, but complains strongly of the length of the notes. He says, 'Dr. Hill's fashion is indulgence in a kind of literary orgie.' I am anxious to know the opinions of other reviewers, as I have all along felt doubtful on this point. I write to give pleasure to men of letters, and I want to know whether I have succeeded or not. How hard it is to judge of one's own work!"

At the end of the year 1888 Dr. Hill advertised for letters written by Dr. Johnson to include in his projected collection. His joy in the very numerous and interesting answers to this advertisement almost absorbs the following letter.

TO MRS. ASHLEY.

"OXFORD, *January* 12, 1889.

"Autograph letters have poured in, and, as I have copied them all myself, I have been and am very busy indeed. My circular has been most fruitful in results, and has brought in the greatest of treasures—a very long letter from Johnson to his wife, written in January 1740, full of tenderness and affection. It begins, 'Dearest Tetty,' calls her 'my dear Girl,' and ends 'My charming Love, Yours Sam. Johnson.' I have written to the owner to ask for leave to have it photographed; it will make a noble frontispiece to the first volume. We give also a photograph of a likeness of Mrs. Johnson, which I have discovered in a book in the Bodleian.

Thank you very much for the copies of letters you sent. Garrick's letter was curious. His advice about the Greek tragedians was a little pretentious. Johnson accused him of not having read even Shakespeare. There is some delay again about the money from Harper's. I believe it is all safe, however. I do wish I had a few hundreds dropping in to fill up the old deficit and set matters straight; it would cheer up Mother greatly. The payment for my work is so late in coming in. I am very hopeful indeed about these Letters of Johnson, but if I work very hard indeed I cannot hope for any payment for quite three years. However, I am cheerful and full of work."

CHAPTER IX

Danger to morality of Club Life—Pigott forgeries—A Joachim concert—Joy in a Liberal victory—Mr. Churton Collins—Death of John Bright—Emerson “a sweet creature but with a screw loose”—Carlyle’s injustice—Oxford lecture system—Tour in Scotland—George Radford, “a good fellow”—How to look more of a grandfather—Style—Examination paper for the Johnson Club—The Bodleian—Gladstone.

TO MRS. ASHLEY.

“OXFORD, *February 9, 1889.*

“We are getting through the winter very well. We could, however, stand a good deal of cold in the fevered state of our minds and hearts. I have not felt so full of wrath since the Bulgarian massacre days, and I feel ready to blaze away like a comet if only I had a sky open to me. I should like to be among our Burghfield folk, speaking in some out-of-the-way Primitive Methodist chapel, or the little Lecture Room on the Common. Balfour’s brutality fires the blood of all whose sensibility is not steeped and deadened in Club or Society life, or in suburban stupidity and respectability. I spoke on Wednesday in the Clarendon Assembly Room, where a large meeting was held to hear Mr. Asquith, M.P. He made a good and humorous speech, and was very playful in his dealings with the Warden of Merton. I seconded a vote of sympathy with O’Brien, and though I had not prepared my speech, for I rose without having been requested be

forehand, I did very well. My mind was full of the subject, and in my walks I had had angry and indignant phrases rolling through my mind. . . . I also read the first paragraph of the *Rambler*, No. 148, where Johnson points out 'that no oppression is so heavy or lasting as that which is inflicted by the perversion and exorbitance of legal authority. . . . Resistance shrinks from an alliance with rebellion, and the villain remains secure in the robes of the magistrate.' . . . How dangerous is the luxury of the Club life and society of London! It most surely saps a very high degree of virtue. I like to dine now and then in a Common Room—a much simpler place of luxury—but I would not dine there often. Dinner parties are, I am sure, as they are at present managed, great enemies to simple virtue. How unlike these pampered people was the fine scholar and simple-minded Vigfússon who on his modest income lived the life of a noble student. I went to his funeral. Plummer of Corpus read the service, and was greatly affected. I never heard it better read. Some of your young students may like to hear of the learning which was gathered round the simple Iclander's grave. The chief mourner was York Powell, great in northern tongues. Sanscrit was represented by Max Müller and Macdonell; the Semitic tongues by Neubauer; the Slavonic by Morfill; Celtic by Rhŷs; Anglo-Saxon by Earle, Napier, Mayhew, and Plummer; Greek by Monro; Modern Greek by Tozer; Latin by Professor Nettleship; language in general by Dr. Murray; Ecclesiastical History by Hatch; the History of Ancient Man by Tylor; besides others whose names I forget. There is a movement to get the fund that was given to the Icelandic Readership transferred to a Slavonic one for our good friend Mr. Morfill."

“ OXFORD, *February* 16, 1889.

“ Lucy and I dined at the Sidgwicks’ last night. There was Mr. — there, who edits Shakespeare and lives on the Iffley Road. (There is a description of a man !) The talk went on conjectural emendations, and I mentioned mine of the line in Hamlet, which I think should run—

‘ The world is out of joint, Oh cursed *spit*. ’

After dinner he asked me quite seriously whether I were revising the text of that play.”

“ OXFORD, *March* 2, 1889.

“ I wonder whether the mighty wave that has swept over England breaks with force on your Western shores [the news of the Pigott forgery]. By the telegraph you will have learnt all the events that in rapid succession have come upon us. We Liberals are full of exultation. Friend as he meets friend in the streets or the Parks rejoices and laughs—a laugh of excitement as much as of joy. It is such a time as it was in the days of Esther the Queen, when the Jews turned upon their cruel enemies. ‘ It is a day of gladness and feasting and a good day. ’ I wish the old simple habits remained, and I could add that it was a day of sending portions one to another. ’ However, this day week the Liberal Club is to dine together and to hear an address from Lord Rosebery. I met Dr. Fairbairn, and in spite of the fire at Mansfield he was radiant with delight. Professor Rhÿs smiles and chuckles, and roams about full of excitement. The poor Tories and Liberal Unionists keep out of one’s way, and have a deprecating look. I hear that the Warden of Merton

has allowed in many admirably balanced sentences that after all it must be admitted that while on the one hand, etc., yet on the other hand the *Times* certainly cannot be altogether acquitted of some indiscretion. Poor man, he has had some 'soothing syrup' lately administered to him in the shape of an address from about fifty members of the University. What dreadful harm the Unionists have done and are doing by the violence of the feeling which they have stirred up! I saw the *Star* yesterday, and did not at all like the coarseness of the abuse. The poor old country has troubled days before it; but I am very hopeful of the future, though there may be a good many years when the coarsest scoundrels will have far too much power. Nevertheless, the whole mass of the people will be studying in the noble school of politics, and after all rough brutality is not much worse than brutality when highly polished, such as Balfour's."

" OXFORD, *March 3*, 1889.

" . . . I always liked both the woman who called in her neighbours when she had found the piece of silver which she had lost and the neighbours who came in. Fancy calling in —! If ever I show signs of having lost the power of admiring another's work or of sympathising in his success, please to set it down to softening of the brain setting in. It shall not come from hardening of the heart. The parcel post has just brought in daffodils from Grasmere, and set hearts dancing."

" OXFORD, *March 9*, 1889.

"Yesterday I heard Joachim. What a genius the man is! I did not know that the human elbow and

the fiddlestick could perform such marvels. Why was I not born a mighty fiddler? But there are hundreds and millions of people and, I suppose, only one Joachim, so that the chances were greatly against me. I am not sure whether, if I could choose, I would not sooner be a great painter or a great fiddler. Let us hope that in a better world we can fiddle away in perfect time to the harmony of the spheres. But where will the Joachim's heaven be if we are all equally good fiddlers? Star must differ from star in glory."

"HAMPSTEAD, *March* 16, 1889.

"There was great news this morning. I heard Andrews' piping voice calling to Leonard through the doorway, 'A great Liberal victory; 630 majority.' The tide has indeed turned and is flowing very fast, sweeping away Primrose dams, and Primrose dames. . . . It was a very striking scene on Thursday night in St. James's Hall. In the welcome given to Mr. Parnell will be for ever drowned many an angry and hostile feeling, and the memory of many an old wrong. The sun began to shine into the room as I wrote this. There will be in many a hut in Ireland this morning the sunshine of the breast. I was too far off to see at all clearly Parnell's face, but I heard his speech well enough. His voice is not melodious, but he spoke well.

"John Morley's speech was very noble. We live in stirring times, and are happy in spite of the strife, because we belong to the party of hope. Instead of dreading the people, we feel greater confidence than ever, because it is at last worth while, for those who know, to labour hard to put knowledge before them. How the political education of the people has advanced in the last few years; and yet we are only at the beginning. Of

course great blunders will be made and great wrongs will be done, but all the while reason and argument will have a wide field open to them, and experience will bring its lesson—a very severe one often. We who can look forward through the far distant years, and even centuries, are cheered by the belief that the mighty struggle of the good and the wise will in the end bear abundant fruits. So here is to the health of my great-grandchildren's great-grandchildren, and a low reverence to their vastly superior wisdom. . . . I have just given Mr. Churton Collins a testimonial for the chair of English Literature, to be vacated by H. Morley. He said that one from me would carry great weight. I wonder whether he is right. I should like to think so. I hope he will be elected, for he is a man likely to inspire a real love of literature. He has none of that dryness which is found in so many of the men who have gone through the regular mill of successful examination. We do not need any more of these Middle English or Early English men, but someone who knows the great writers who make the glory of our language, not its antiquity."

" OXFORD, *November 27*, 1888.

"What a fine old worker is passing away as I write, for the last reports seem to show that John Bright is dying. *Ultimus Romanorum*, the last of the grand old race of Nonconformists. Narrow, it is true, but what depth and strength and height! Those who pray each day for their daily bread should include his name in their action of grace. If only he could have sometimes felt the truth of Cromwell's words, 'It is possible, sir, that you may be mistaken,' he would have been no doubt far greater, but he would not have

been John Bright. . . . For composition just at present I have a strange indisposition. I should like a few weeks in a wild country, where 'step following step and thought by thought led on,' I might perhaps write with pleasure or at all events vigour."

It was March 1889 before the end really came. On the day of Bright's funeral Birkbeck Hill wrote :—

TO MRS. ASHLEY.

"OXFORD, *March* 30, 1889.

"What delightful weather you are having ! What is an old battered, bald-pated, broken-down, wheezy father to a child who has days of sunshine ? I may be missed 'when fields are dank and ways are mire,' I may be of some use in helping 'to waste a sullen day,' but with bright blue skies and sunshine, I can be wheeled on one side and left there till the spring and summer and autumn have passed. . . . To-day John Bright is to be buried. What a noble old fellow he was—a true-born Englishman quite as much as Samuel Johnson. His name will stand out among the foremost of the century. I am inclined to place him as the greatest master of prose of his age—a man who knew but one language, at least at all well, but who was a perfect master of it. His works live after him, and shall live long. I am reading Cabot's memoirs of Emerson, but am not much taken with it or the hero, and skip a good deal. There are fine passages, but Emerson seems to me to have lived in a haze—a golden one, perhaps. I am disappointed at learning from his letters and journals so little about men. He met within a few weeks Landor, Coleridge, Carlyle,

and Wordsworth, yet he has next to nothing to say of them. He adds nothing to the experiences of the world and one's knowledge of mankind. The Editor quotes a saying of Taylor, the Methodist preacher, 'On coming out of some Transcendental discourse of his, he said, "It would take as many sermons like that to convert a human soul as it would quarts of skimmed milk to make a man drunk."' The same man said, however, 'Mr. Emerson is one of the sweetest creatures God ever made; there is a screw loose somewhere in the machinery, yet I cannot tell where it is, for I never heard it jar. He must go to Heaven when he dies, for if he went to Hell the devil would not know what to do with him. But he knows no more of the religion of the New Testament than Balaam's ass did of the principles of the Hebrew grammar.' . . . Mr. Morfill had tea with us on Thursday, and was very amusing. He is as conversable as Johnson's friend, the Bishop of St. Asaph. I had a pleasant dinner at Trinity with Robinson Ellis on Tuesday. Raper told me the following story, which he had, I think, from Browning himself. At a Royal Academy dinner Browning was seated next to Disraeli. D—— said to B—— that the walls were covered with rubbish, and shortly afterwards, getting up to speak, enlarged on the glories of English art, especially on the portrait painting and the landscapes, and pointed to the walls. On sitting down, B—— asked how he reconciled what he had said to him privately with his speech. He replied, 'My dear Browning, are you so ignorant as not to know the difference between a man's private and public utterances?' B—— repeated this to Gladstone, who looked severe, and sternly said, 'Hellish.' Raper told me also of a parson who has just been trying to steal 12 or 14 feet of — Hill along his property.

He had cut down his hedge and advanced his fence. Before the County Court Judge, he and his labourers swore that the new fence was exactly on the spot where the old hedge used to be. The Judge said he would go and inspect the spot. He had the line shown to him where the old fence was said to be, sent for a spade, had the ground dug up, and at once discovered the roots of the trees in the old hedge. I wish some M.P. would move for a return of all the trials, civil and criminal, of late years, in which parsons have been proved rogues and criminals. It would prove, I am convinced, that as a class they are very low down in morality—a long way below attorneys.”

“OXFORD, *April* 27, 1889.

“I think some day of writing a letter on Carlyle's injustice. He interests me more than any man of this century. There is, as you know, much that I honour in him, and even love; nevertheless, I see that he was cruelly unjust to the great army of honest workers who were all around him. He ought to have distinguished from the wind-bags and the self-seeking—or partly self-seeking, at all events notoriety-seeking philanthropists—and such men as Cobden and Bright, who talked to convince; who talked unwillingly, at a great sacrifice of time, comfort, and money; and who did convince, and made food cheap, and enlarged the borders of comfort beyond all telling. Had Carlyle known that most touching of all events—how Cobden went to Bright's home—the home of the widowed man and the motherless babe—and stirred him up in the midst of his misery to go and work for the miserable, he would have seen that the age of heroes had not come to an end.”

“ OXFORD, *May* 4, 1889.

“ Both Liberal meetings were very successful, the Corn Exchange being full, the second almost crowded. There was one great blot in the first meeting ; a mischievous, ignorant, but clever and handsome young demagogue made the most mischievous speech I ever heard. In his fine new clothes with gold sleeve-links he violently attacked the rich, never once spoke of any good piece of legislation in past times, maintained that no one who had not a pound a week should pay any taxes, advocated the total abolition of all indirect taxation, professed a doubt whether professional incomes should pay any income tax ; and with all this supported free education, free libraries, and free hospitals. . . . The mischief done by Balfour is great ; but that done by a party of such fellows as this man would be far greater ; the injustice and suffering and degradation would be far more extensive. Think of a nation in which some millions of people would not sacrifice even a pint of beer or a pipe of tobacco a week for their country !

“ Lady Aberdeen, the following night, spoke only of the duty that had to be done, not of the gains that were to be made, and was more loudly cheered than the base demagogue. The English people, I am convinced, can be far more deeply stirred by the appeal to their hearts than to their pockets. Mother looked very well indeed at the Women’s Meeting, sitting in the front row. For its success she had done as much as anyone ; a good deal more, I think, by reconciling City and University, and by her work with the poorer women. I was proud of her as she sat there beaming away in her new bonnet. After the meeting we went to Mrs. Massie’s. It was a curious meeting—the

Ex-Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and Mr. Redmond, who had been in prison more than once. We were all very friendly together. I was very sorry to see how few University men there were at the meetings. No doubt it is a busy time, but it is the feebleness of the folk that keeps, I fear, most away. Common Rooms are not good for either common sense or common honesty."

"OXFORD, *May* 11, 1889.

"With us the spring has burst into summer in the most astonishing way. We had warm showers and sunshine mingled together for some days, and all the leaves and flowers leapt into life. Our plum blossoms have even dropped off, and given place to little green pinheads which promise some day to be purple plums. The pear-trees are a mass of flower; I sit every afternoon on the bench beneath ours and smoke out of a long churchwarden pipe, which Edmund left, the tobacco which was sent as a sample addressed to the Rev. Dr. Hill. Unfortunately there are not many pipefuls. Why do not ravens come down bearing the fragrant weed in their bills? I do not pretend to be a second Elijah, but I have not bowed the knee to Respectability, and deserve a little recognition from the celestial powers. . . . I shook hands with old Freeman as he was rolling along the Parks. The old bear did not growl, and even smiled through his sandy-grey mane, but I doubt whether he knew me. He was greatly grieved, I am told, to have only five or six to attend his first public lecture—on the political geography of Europe, I think. What a confusion the lecture system has got into here! I do not believe that the affable archangel Raphael would draw unless he had Michael to drive folk in; but after all Raphael was content with

an audience of two which dwindled down to one, when he entered 'on studious thoughts abstruse.' In those days the women did not care for lectures. Had they done so, they would no doubt have kept their hands and teeth off the forbidden fruit."

Early in June 1889, Dr. and Mrs. Hill started for Scotland. Their object was to visit every place visited by Johnson and Boswell, and for this purpose they were well supplied with introductions from Lord Rosebery and others. The greater part of their wanderings were made in company with "Mr. Lancelot Speed, a pleasant young Cambridge man, who has brought with him another Cambridge friend, Mr. Pryor." Dr. Hill and Mr. Speed were both commissioned by Messrs. Sampson Low & Co. to undertake the journey, the one to write and the other to sketch. Mr. Speed's very charming illustrations helped to make what Birkbeck Hill liked to call "a noble book."

He was too busy taking notes of all he saw to write letters during this tour, but the gap can be pleasantly filled from the diary kept by his wife, who during these pleasant weeks spent in the Highlands was in complete charity with the old eighteenth-century Doctor and his guide.

Dr. Hill's own impressions can be read by those who like in his book, *The Footsteps of Dr. Johnson*, and much besides, too, for the book is much more than a mere record of a few weeks' travelling. Indeed, its author always cherished a hope of reprinting it, shorn of its pictures and fine binding, as a solid contribution to the social history of Scotland in the eighteenth century.

The book was a costly one to produce, and it was not surprising that its high price prevented any large

sale. Although in the case of this book Birkbeck Hill felt himself adequately paid, yet he had an author's natural desire to be read. In 1890 he wrote to his friend and fellow-member of the Johnson Club—Mr. George Radford :—

" OXFORD, *December* 19, 1890.

" Your letter did me great good. The Scribe had told me that not a single member of the Johnson Club would buy my big book, as it was too dear. And here is one good fellow who has not been frightened by the price. There are only 999 copies left to sell now, so that a second edition is becoming possible, if not probable. . . . As for the punch, I must refer you to the Scribe. The dignity of the Prior would be injured were he to condescend to such details as the sweetening of a bowl of that liquor."

But to return to the tour which preceded the writing of the book. The four travellers, after joining forces at Inverness, crossed Scotland by the Caledonian Canal, and reached Skye early in June. On the 6th Mrs. Birkbeck Hill wrote :—

" SKYE, *June* 6, 1889.

" The road from Portree led over some of the worst ground in Skye ; miles of bog stretched on every side, with hardly a cow or a sheep to be seen, but all along the road there were numbers of cottages of the rudest description, built of large stones and thatched. They might have been made snug and as comfortable as the low Berkshire cottages we are used to at Burghfield, but most of them had no window, and many of them no chimney—a hole in the thatch allowed the smoke

to escape in most cases, but in one there was not even that, and it was curling out in light wreaths all over the miserable roof. Luckily the smell of peat smoke is not so disagreeable or so harmful as coal smoke, and the poor folk do not seem to mind it. They live with their very wide doors always open, and through the wide aperture get air and light, but we noticed that all their workaday dress was smoke-hued, and their complexions are curiously dusky. They are an ugly race, though many of them have good, earnest faces, which attract in spite of ugliness."

"SKYE, *June 24, 1889.*

"When we came out into the little jetty where we fancied our boat was lying ready for us, we found the only boat there was the doctor's, and that ours was away up on the hillside, with its oars put away in the inn coach-house, and the pins no one knew where but the master, and he'd gone off for the day. Our two young men are, however, equal to most emergencies. With the help of some men idling round, the boat was soon carried down to the water, the maid found the heavy narrow oars, and we stole the doctor's pins! As they were only rough pieces of stick broken off from the fence, we did not feel very guilty. Birkbeck and I were landed below Dunvegan Castle, and soon made our way to the main entrance. It is modern, and therefore less interesting to us, as Johnson never saw it, but it opened on to a fine staircase with a gallery round hung with skins of all sorts and weapons and horns. We were received most kindly by Miss Macleod, the very ideal of a hostess in such a house, a lady of the old school, with charming kindly manner, fine figure daintily dressed in black brocade and lace,

and in spite of her feebleness (she is seventy-eight) every inch *une grande dame*. We plunged into the vast topic of Dr. Johnson, and were soon reading his letter, looking at the Prince Charlie relics he had looked at, searching in the library for a book he read there, sitting in his bedroom, and looking out of the little postern gate in the wall on the sea side, of which Boswell makes mention. Miss Macleod showed us everything she thought would interest us, and as we walked along the corridors and up and down flights of steps she told us of the Fairy Grandmother of the race, after whom the Fairy Tower built by her grandson is still named, and of the Danish Tower, which is the oldest part of all, and in which she showed us a terrible pit, where the 'wicked chieftain' is said to have kept his wife till she died. The entrance to this pit is from a short passage by the drawing-room; a small door leads up four steps and down one into a narrow dungeon, and there in the floor of the dungeon is the hole into the pit—a horrible place, twenty feet deep, where no light could enter. When one looks into such places the horrible wickedness of the old times seems to stare you in the face and shut out everything but its own deformity.

“ . . . We set off, laden with lovely hothouse flowers, for the bay, to meet a dog-cart, which was to take us to the headland opposite Eilan Isa, the island Macleod offered to give Johnson if he would come to live there. We found there a fine breezy headland, on which we sat, and some of us slept too. It was a day to remember. The sea was calm, a blue haze softened the outline of the hills, the Outer Hebrides could be faintly seen in the far north-west, and near us the bleat of sheep and the song of the lark were the only sounds in the hot, sleepy air.”

“STRUAN, *June 25.*

“By nine the Macleod’s gamekeeper came over to see what he could do to help us, and we were able with his help to get a good boat for our expedition to Wia Island, where Johnson saw the cave, and on to Talisker, where he spent a day he much enjoyed. As usual, much time was lost in getting ready, but about ten we were off. We were now in the Atlantic, with not much to break the long roll of her waves; but the sea was calm, and there was so little wind that it was only now and then that we could use our sail. The boat was very rough and dirty with fishing, but a comfortable seat was made for me on a large box covered with a great-coat, and for the first time in my life I could feel some of the pleasures of yachting. The coast of Skye is thickly studded with islands of fine precipitous rock, many of them of fantastic shape, and some with caverns in their sides. The long rolling waves came in fine breakers against them on Tuesday, filling the caverns with clouds of spray; all around us were the sea-birds, cormorants, puffins, guillemots, curlews, oyster-catchers. We reached Wia Cave in time, and had a good clamber up to it, as you go up a steep hill and then down the other side to reach it. It is rather a great cleft in the rocks than a cavern, only a small part of it being roofed in, and the passage running down to the beach on the other side of the island. . . . When we came back the tide had risen, and our boat could not come up to the stones at which we had landed; everyone looked at me and at the wide space of water with an expression of dismay on the five faces, and then someone said, ‘You will have to be carried, Mrs. Hill.’ I pitied the man who would have to carry me, but I was too old a traveller to

object. I got on the gamekeeper's back, and reaching the boat-side, which rose some three feet out of water. I was tumbled into the stern very much like a bale of goods. I was laughing too much to help myself, but I took no hurt, and was greeted with a round of applause when I was safe in. We sailed or rowed across Talisker Bay, getting a grand view of Macleod's Maidens, the rocks Brett painted two or three years ago, as our boat moved along; then we had a little bit of ticklish steering between rocks with the breakers covering the sea with foam on either side of us, and then we entered Talisker. We landed and walked through the hot June sunshine to the house where Johnson had found the fine fruit-trees and beautiful garden. They still deserve all the admiration he gave them."

The latter part of this tour Birkbeck Hill took alone; in spite of note-taking, he managed to write as usual to his daughter, Mrs. Ashley. The following letter shows how ready he was to play Grandfather to the little granddaughter in distant Canada, when chance should bring them together. He had already written on the first news of the baby's birth in the preceding April, "I am perplexed what form I must put on, what change I must make, so as to become the grandfather; but I have not as yet struck out anything suitable. Unfortunately, I do wheeze already, use spectacles, often walk slowly, am bald, look benevolent, at times perhaps venerable, am a little bowed in the shoulders, use a stick to walk with, like the fireside, am garrulous, full of wise saws and modern instances, lean, slippered, speak a little off the matter—what more can I do?"

“EDINBURGH, *July 28, 1889.*

“How I long to see and nurse Baby! In the train from Oban yesterday there was a baby of six months, who was very friendly, and held my hand and smiled on me. He had been a little restless, but I stroked his hand, and pretended to be sleepy myself, and nodded my head as I had often done to you and the others, till he fell asleep, to the great admiration of the parents and an aunt. The father asked me whether I had mesmerised the child. If I were with you, I should do the same for little Annie. In the pride of my heart I told them of my little grandchild in Canada. . . . The day was most beautiful, and the enjoyment was great—all the greater as Johnson had not traversed this course, so that there was no need for me to keep my memory and observation on the stretch. My endurance is really very great. I am usually on the move twelve hours in every day, with a rest at some inn for lunch; and often my mind has to be active all the day. My note-book is almost full, and I am hopeful of making an interesting book. I have had a fine Sunday in Edinburgh, and have wandered about, visiting of course James’s Court, and thinking of Hume and Adam Smith, and Pascal Paoli, and Franklin and Boswell and Johnson, and all who knew it—and the less famous men, Robertson, Blair, and the rest. How happy he is who can people a strange city, where he knows no one, with the worthies of the past! I do not feel lonely here, for I know the lives of so many citizens. I wander through the churchyard, and recognise old acquaintance. In the Greyfriars Churchyard I discovered a Latin inscription on Maclaurin which Johnson had helped to write.”

“OXFORD, *September 21, 1889.*

“As for ‘a gift of style,’ I do not know that I have it. Whatever power I have has been acquired by constant practice and by the study of good writers. I have aimed first at being quite clear, and clearness depends in English greatly on the order of the words, for we have no inflections to show to what each word belongs. Then I have tried to guard against affectations and tricks of writing. Lastly, I have formed the habit of trying the cadence of each sentence by the ear—not that I utter what I write, but that I think over the sound in my mind. A good ear in composition no doubt comes by nature, but it may be greatly improved by art. It can be injured by the habit of reading bad writers. We should let scarcely a day pass without reading a few pages of some master. . . . We have received a circular asking us to take in a guest for the Mansfield College opening days. I have told Mr. Massie that it must not be anyone who will put his hands together—finger point to finger point—and hold forth. If I am to have anyone, let me have one of the godless.”

Whatever happened with the Mansfield guest it is impossible to imagine that Birkbeck Hill was troubled with anyone sitting “finger point to finger point” on the following 13th of December. On that night the Solemn Annual Supper of the Johnson Club was held by the Brethren at the “Cheshire Cheese.” Brother Augustine Birrell read the paper, and if anyone “held forth” afterwards, it was probably Birkbeck Hill himself. It was on this occasion at any rate that he set an examination paper on *Boswell* before the Brethren—and expected the questions to be answered, too, to

judge by his subsequent letter to his friend Mr. George Radford.

“ *December 15, 1889.*

“ Examination paper set for the Johnson Club.

“ 1. Show how a slice of plum-pudding can be made a measure of a man's feelings.

“ 2. Prove that the fact that the Irish never speak well of one another shows that they are a fair people.

“ 3. Of whom was it said that much can be made of them if they be caught young?

“ 4. To what has a dog's walking on its hinder legs been compared?

“ 5. Define a throne of felicity.

“ 6. Show that the Johnson Club at the present time is passing through a turnpike.

“ 7. What base ingratitude did a man show by reading his tragedy to Johnson?

“ 8. What fact did Johnson commemorate in the lines which begin

‘I put my hat upon my head
And walked into the Strand’?

“ 9. What was it that Johnson put into Boswell's head which made it ache when the blame was unjustly laid on port wine?

“ 10. On what occasion was a publisher known to thank God?

“ 11. Between what two domestic animals is there no settling the point of precedency?

“ 12. What were the Scotchmen trying to get who died of dropsies?

“ 13. In what drink may a man be drowned before it makes him drunk?

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"14. On what occasion did Johnson say that he did not care to speak ill of any man behind his back, and to what profession did he nevertheless avow his belief that the gentleman belonged?"

"15. What had Johnson found for a man when he declined to find him an understanding?"

"16. Under what circumstances may a man go and take the King of Russia by the nose at the head of his army?"

"17. Where must a man study who has a mind to prance?"

"18. What is the last refuge of a scoundrel?"

"19. On what occasion was a writ of *quare adhæsit pavimento* moved for?"

"20. What specious pretence did a man's wife make who was a receiver of stolen goods?"

TO MR. GEORGE RADFORD.

"OXFORD, *December* 17, 1889.

"I shall be very glad to clear up any points in the examination paper which baffles your research. That you have read my Hume's *Letters* is a satisfaction to me, for the public has taken scarcely any interest in them. They ought to have been edited by the Earl of — and brought out with a coronet on the binding, and then they might have equalled the success of Lord Carnarvon's pretentious ignorance. I have just read his introduction to Chesterfield's *Letters*; the man—let me say nobleman—has no critical faculty of any kind."

As a resident graduate in Oxford Birkbeck Hill possessed a vote in Congregation. His interest in the government of the University was at all times great,

and his vote could always be counted on for the support of any Liberal measure. The matter, however, which he had personally most at heart was the management of the Bodleian Library. He loved the building as only those who spend silent hours of study in the quiet niches in Duke Humphrey's Gallery can love it, those niches where tired eyes can gaze through ivy-framed windows, arched and latticed, into the green of Exeter garden, and the tired brain rest a moment and be still. For all that made for the scholarliness of the Bodleian, for all that made for its peacefulness, Birkbeck Hill was an ardent partisan.

"OXFORD, *February 1, 1890.*

"On Thursday there was a great field day in Congregation about the Curators of the Bodleian, but the guns were fired in one direction in the hope that the shot would scatter and go in another. This took away some of the interest. Nettleship and Pelham spoke well. Mowat read out a clever and sarcastic attack on the Curators by Bywater, who was ill and so not able to attend. Max Müller spoke, white with rage, but mere clap-trap. — was partly successful and partly foolish. He called those who attacked him a 'miserable cabal,' and ended, with all the tenderness of an anti-vivisectionist, that he hoped he had hurt no one's feelings. Andrew Clark spoke briefly and to the point, and the moment he sat down up jumped the Vice-Chancellor, who had become very impatient, with 'Dissolvimus,' etc. I forgot to say that Monro had made a speech in a tone which would have become his mother's funeral."

TO MRS. ASHLEY.

“ OXFORD, *February 7, 1890.*

“ This has been a great week in Oxford, with Mr. Gladstone here. First I must tell you that I met Bryce on Sunday, and he told me that John Morley said that my article on Gladstone's Residence in Oxford was the best article that had yet appeared in the *Speaker*, and with this Bryce agreed. I have scarcely heard the article mentioned in Oxford. The *Speaker*, I fancy, is not much read here, for it is not socialistic enough for the young men, not gossipy enough for others, and too liberal for the Liberal Unionists. . . . Gladstone was most kind, and paid me a most ingenious and fine compliment. Speaking of my *Boswell*, he said, ‘ You have succeeded in doing what Macaulay attempted to do and failed—you have suppressed Croker.’ At the Union, when he returned thanks, his speech was most touching, and the effect was wonderful. We all stood up and clapped our hands, and cheered and waved our hats, and there were tears in some eyes, too. I wish you could both have heard his voice when speaking of Oxford he ended by saying, ‘ I love her from the bottom of my heart.’ ”

CHAPTER X

Marriage of his younger daughter—Lectures to Board School teachers—
Faults of his early education—"A fine compliment" from John
Morley—Cardinal Newman—Return of ill-health—A Swiss farm-
house—Happiness of a working man's lot—Renan—Honorary Fellow
of Pembroke—Dante and eternal punishment—Bryce's *America*.

THE year 1890 brought a fresh change in the tenor of Birkbeck Hill's life by the marriage of his younger daughter, Lucy, to Mr. C. G. Crump.

He mentions the event in the following letter to an American friend, then Miss Caroline King, since Mrs. Leroy Phillips. Professor and Mrs. Ashley brought their little daughter across from Toronto in time for the wedding, so that Birkbeck Hill got his chance to play Grandfather.

"3 THE CRESCENT, OXFORD,
"July 19, 1890.

"DEAR MISS KING,—What can you think of the neglect which has left your kind letter so long unanswered? Please to lay all the blame on my wife, though she, poor innocent soul, thinks that you have heard from me long ago. I have taken advantage of her going with one of our sons on a picnic up the river to write to you; she will not discover my neglect. As soon as I read your letter, I at once took possession of it, and said that I would answer it myself. I laid it on my study table, and I have kept

it there, looking reproachfully at me ever since, except now and then, when I could stand its reproaches no longer, and so hid it beneath a packet of papers. You do not know how a man is given to put off writing whose trade is with the pen. But now I have a little breathing space, for the two books with which I have been engaged for a full year are now both in the printer's hands. One is a big book, entitled *The Footsteps of Dr. Johnson in Scotland*; it will have more than a hundred illustrations, and will be handsomely printed and bound, and make just the kind of book for one rich person to give to another. I hope some day there may be a popular edition of it, for I have given so much work to it that I should like it to have many readers. Having finished these two books, I am now returning to the *Johnson Letters*, and intend to stick closely to them; doing little else excepting now and then writing an article for our new journal, the *Speaker*, to which I am a contributor. My thoughts therefore being now turned to my *Letters*, the reproaches made by your very kind one get an ally; my wife, too, as I have said, is absent, and there is no one at home but my dear little granddaughter, who would scorn to betray her grandfather and let it be known how negligent I had been. But now I have mentioned her, I must sound her praises. She is Canadian born, is nearly fifteen months old, and is as dear a little maid as I have ever seen. My daughter and her husband came over from Toronto with her just in time for the marriage of my younger daughter. Just at present they are visiting friends, and I am in command of this priceless treasure. You should see her smile and stretch out her little arms to me, as if I were the Promised Land and she longing to be at it. Having

mentioned a marriage, it would be unkind to you, who have no doubt the natural curiosity of all young ladies, not to tell you that everything went off very well. The bride wore a dress, but of what material or colour I have not the least notion; she also had on a hat, or was it a bonnet? She went with me to the chapel in great state in a carriage lent by a neighbour, and she came back in still greater state with a brand new husband by her side. All the rest of us came back on foot, for like Jenny Wren, 'we never go too fine.'

"What a long rigmarole I am writing to you! as if there were no Samuel Johnson and his letters to think about. None of the collectors whom you mentioned have written to me, so I must write to them and stir them up a little. Please to tell your friends that now is their chance for immortality. If they will only send me a copy of a Johnson letter, their names shall figure in my Preface. The two volumes will be uniform with the six volumes of my *Boswell*, so that they will go down to posterity in a stately coach and eight. For such an acknowledgment, I might be expected to make a heavy charge, but all I ask is a copy of a letter.—Yours very sincerely,

"G. BIRKBECK HILL."

This marriage made a great gap in the little family; Mrs. Birkbeck Hill's health was little, if any, better than her husband's, and she felt the undivided care of even so small a household overmuch for her strength. For a few months Professor and Mrs. Ashley and the little granddaughter were with them, but the end of the summer vacation obliged them to return to America. Not, however, to their home in Toronto. In August 1890, Professor Ashley was appointed Professor of Economic History at Harvard University, Massa-

chusetts, and thither he and Mrs. Ashley sailed when they left England. Early in the spring of 1891 Birkbeck Hill and his wife went to Switzerland, where they passed some pleasant months. On his return to Oxford he was confronted with a task which he found hard to begin after a free life of Alpine walks at Salvan, or pleasant University society at Geneva. He had undertaken to give a course of lectures on Literature before certain members of the Teachers' Association. These lectures were delivered in New College Hall during the Long Vacation to an audience mainly composed of Board School masters and mistresses, and a very appreciative audience Dr. Hill found them. Afterwards the lectures were gathered into a small book under the title of *Writers and Readers*. Perhaps more than any of his writings, this book is full of little touches of autobiographical interest, as undoubtedly it bears the impress of his most intimate literary thoughts and tastes.

TO MRS. ASHLEY.

"OXFORD, *June 27, 1891.*

"The idle activity of the Alps still seems too attractive to me, and I do not easily settle down into work. Had I only found a bundle of proofs to correct, and had I nothing else to do but to go through them with the most exact carefulness, I should have quickly got my neck into the very easy collar. But it is a different matter when one has to begin composing. My lectures are a great trouble to me. I do not wish to say anything to anybody just at present, but only to read the infinitely better things than I can myself write. At times the mind gets full, and a kind of restlessness comes to pour out; but that is not my case at present. I have not the slightest wish to

instruct anyone but myself. With this week's work I am not over well pleased, for I have been stretching out my old lectures, which were an hour's duration each, into three lectures of 45 or 50 minutes. The patches I am putting in are interesting enough, but they break, I fear, the old web and spoil the pattern."

" OXFORD, *July* 11, 1891.

" My lectures are still taking up a great deal of my time, and are costing me more work than I expected. I do not write so fast as I once did, or else the work is harder. As I am only to receive £10—it is all that can be afforded—my five weeks' work, letting alone the twelve hours of delivering the lectures, will not be overpaid. However, having lately found out that Wordsworth by the age of fifty had not made so much as £140 by his poetry, I hope I shall not be often heard complaining. I have just finished his *Life* by his nephew. The Church of England has a great deal to answer for in the harm it did Wordsworth; he ought to have been strong enough to withstand it; but it was too much for his middle age, and began from that time to choke him. He was made for something better in his later years than *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*. If you have the book in the Toronto Library, I hope you will read a most interesting letter of his on the education of a daughter. It is in vol. ii. pp. 164–70 (see also pp. 181–83). . . . How often do I wish that errors had not been committed in my own education; the evil effects of which I was long in discovering, and against many of which I have struggled in vain. Though my dear father was the most unselfish man I ever knew and the most tender parent, entirely free, too, from the weak indulgence of over tenderness, yet from his perfect

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conviction that his system of education was right in every respect—whereas in many it was very faulty—he did me irreparable harm. I never forget that I owe very much indeed to him, but his system was my greatest enemy—so far as the intellect was concerned.”

“August 1, 1891.

“My lectures are going off well ; I have given three of the course, and have three more to give next week. Mr. Murray Macdonald told me that he heard some of the men wishing that every day before they began their school work they could hear such lectures. This I thought a very pretty compliment.”

“OXFORD, *August 15, 1891.*

“I am repeating my lectures, and have now a larger audience with the men and women together. They are eager and attentive. One good lady told Mother that she hugs herself at every lecture. I am very glad that she does not hug me, for she is somewhat stout.”

“HAMPSTEAD, *December 12, 1891.*

“I dined on Wednesday at the Eighty Club Dinner, and heard John Morley make a good speech. After dinner, I went up to him and said that I had worked under him in the bright days of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. He replied, ‘I knew your face, but I know you better by your books. You are doing splendid work in the quiet fields of literature.’

“That was a fine compliment, worth something from such a man. To-night I go to the Johnson Club Supper to enter upon my second year of office as Prior.

It is altogether contrary to the constitution of the Club, for among the rules is one which declares the Prior ineligible for re-election. I intend to denounce the authors of this violent revolution, and to entreat that they only may be hanged, drawn and quartered, and that I may be treated no worse than Richard Cromwell. I had a pleasant dinner at Jesus College last Sunday. Dr. Pope told me there was a strong feeling among some men that I ought to have a post as Lecturer or Reader in the University, and that he hoped that in a few years something might be done. But my strength will not be very much in a few years. It was pleasant to hear this."

"HASTINGS, *January 15, 1892.*

"Have you heard of the proposal to put up a statue to Cardinal Newman in Broad Street, opposite to Trinity College? I am meditating an article on his *Apology*, in which I shall fiercely attack him and his followers. No one, so far as I know, has pointed out the childishness and silliness of his writings. If I can get up strength enough, I will do my best against him. It was in Broad Street that the candle was lighted three and a half centuries ago. The priests shall not blow it out. The world is getting no doubt a better light than Latimer and Ridley were able to kindle, but till it has got it we must not let theirs be extinguished, or replaced by dim rush lights."

"HAMPSTEAD, *February 6, 1892.*

"I have just finished a very interesting book, Heine's *Religion and Philosophy in Germany*, well translated by J. Snodgrass. If you have it in the

Library, do not fail to read it; it is not long, and is full of thought and wit. As for the philosophy which he extols I can make nothing of it, and think it is all moonshine. I do not believe that he or Hegel and some of the others knew what they were talking about. How much greater light has been thrown on the world by the invention of lucifers than by the discovery that 'there exists but one being, the Ego, the absolute'! How much rubbish has the mighty Darwin swept away!"

"OXFORD, *February* 13, 1892.

"... We are not bound to be always clearing our consciences by protestations or sullen silence. Everyone has a right to go to the devil his or her own way, provided that neighbours are not inconvenienced thereby."

The winter, and still more the spring of 1892, proved very trying to Birkbeck Hill's always uncertain health. A severe attack of bronchitis in March made his doctors strongly recommend wintering for some years out of England; while the illness served to prove more clearly that Mrs. Hill was not herself fit to have the care of an invalid unaided. A plan to leave Oxford in order to make a joint home during the summer months with their daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Crump, came under discussion, and was in fact carried into effect in the summer of 1893. But for the winter some other home had to be chosen. Pleasant memories clung round the Lake of Geneva for both Dr. and Mrs. Hill, and they were moreover attracted thither by the fact that their friends of old Corsican days, Colonel and Frau von Sydow, were settled in the neighbourhood of Clarens. Not far from the Colonel's

house, 'à l'Empereur,' round which Napoleonic traditions clung, stood a modest farmhouse, on the road from Clarens to Chailly. Orchards and meadows at that time stretched up to the very door, and through the apple-trees were seen fair glimpses of blue water and snowy peaks. Behind rose the terraced vineyards of Les Pléiades and Mont Cubly, till they melted into flowery alp and sombre forest. The house was stone-built, with a broad glass gallery overhanging the road. The farmer and his wife—a somewhat sour old lady—occupied one end of the building; during the winter the cows lived in the middle; while at the other end, nearest the road, was a small and sparsely furnished *appartement*, six small rooms, a stone staircase, and the pleasant sunny gallery. This *appartement*, enriched with books and pictures, made an ideal little home through the winter months, and here for three winters Dr. and Mrs. Hill lived. The climate, severe as the frost often was during January and February, suited Birkbeck Hill admirably. He delighted once more in mountain walks, in the beauty of the place, and in all the little incidents of foreign life. Unfortunately, by an irony of fate which often pursued them, what suited him was not good for his wife's health. Much as she too loved Switzerland, their little house had to be abandoned in 1896 for a villa on the Riviera.

The immediate result of Dr. Hill's illness in the winter of 1892 was a visit to Looe, in Cornwall, whence he wrote to Mrs. Ashley, on March 25, 1892:—

“I have read Will's [Professor Ashley] lecture with much pleasure, and am greatly pleased to find that he holds the view that man is happier than he was of old. How discouraging it is to all effort if we believed that all the labour of all the wise and good men and women

age after age ended in nothing ! We might in that case with good reason say, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die,' since with all our toil and self-sacrifice we do nothing. I have little doubt that there was a period in our history when working men did fall back in happiness—the period that began with the conquests of the first Pitt and ended some time after the repeal of the Corn Laws. No nation could stand the vast strain of those wars and that reckless expenditure, combined as they were with a monstrous system of taxation and shameless waste of money on favourites of the king or ministers, without dreadful suffering. At the same time, the liberty of each man was greatly lessened, while the rapid growth of the towns, with no system to check the evils thence arising which could be prevented, caused a new kind of misery. I have little doubt that life was more desirable generally in England in the reigns of the first two Georges than in those of the last two and of William iv. I think that Will might have still more strongly insisted on the happiness of a working man's lot. I never pity a carpenter who works in a country village or small town. I know that in digging in my garden the time passes rapidly and pleasantly. I have often wished that strength and time had allowed me to stay longer there, for I left my spade and hoe unwillingly for my pen. If once all feeling of snobbishness could be cleared away, the workman's lot would seem far preferable to the clerk's. When a man works on fields that are his own, so that the trees that he plants and the walls that he builds will be his or his children's after him, I know few happier lots. 'Constant employment with a feeling that you are getting on,' was, according to Mr. Holloway, John Bright's definition of happiness. (He was not sure of the exact words, but that was the

sense.) The working man who has learnt to love books in addition is not to be pitied. What a sermon I am preaching! Will will be jealous, and think I am going to drive him from his chair, so I will slacken rein."

The November of 1892 saw Dr. and Mrs. Hill settled in their farmhouse at Baugy, whence he wrote to Mrs. Ashley :—

" BAUGY SUR CLARENS, SWITZERLAND,
" November 10, 1892.

" I am deep in Renan's *Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse*, which Mother has bought for me. You know my liking for biographies and autobiographies, so that you will expect me to find such a book as this most interesting. Renan, of whom I knew next to nothing, but of whom I will know more, was a fine old fellow. His autobiography is not quite so good as I had been led to expect from the reviews, admirable as it is. He accuses the English of egotism, but he is in places—though not often—too egotistic to be altogether agreeable. Then, too, he now and then falls into that fine writing—with far more pretty words than good sense—to which his countrymen have long been given. There is one passage about beautiful women which might have been written by at least ten thousand French fools, and so should not have been written by Renan. In one passage he regrets that his education was in languages and history, and not in science. He says: 'Je peux bien le dire, l'ardeur extrême que ces sciences vitales excitaient dans mon esprit me fait croire que, si je les avais cultivées d'une façon suivie, je fusse arrivé à plusieurs des résultats de

Darwin, que j'entrevois.' I have written on the margin, 'Let me play the lion too.' Many finely written passages hit on the one hand the English High Church party, above all Newman, and on the other hand Stanley and Jowett—not that Renan had either one or the other in view.

"I feel sure that he is utterly wrong when he says, 'Je fus entraîné vers les sciences historiques, petites sciences conjecturales qui se défont sans cesse après d'être faites, et qu'on négligera dans cent ans. On voit poindre, en effet, un âge où l'homme n'attachera plus beaucoup d'intérêt à son passé.'

"'Poor devils,' these men of the coming age. But the whole notion is absurd. As if the nature of man, which has been slowly formed in countless generations, can be suddenly changed in one! That deep interest which we take in the past, like that deep interest which we take in those things which were not dreamed of in Horatio's philosophy, is innate—if not in all yet in a vast number of men. The whole object of the natural sciences which Renan so justly admires is to discover the nature of man, his origin and his dependence on any higher power or his *independence* of them—if they exist. Man will always remain, it seems to me, the chief and supreme object of study, and man to be studied fully must be studied in his past. How does Renan expect the future man to guide his little bark of life if he draws no lessons from the past; how does he expect him to fill up the vacancies of action if he has not the past over which his thought shall range? This wonderful generation must have perfect health, and not need the solace of old books, old times, and the men and women of old, in days of sickness. Happily I shall long have wheezed away before this blessed period arrives.

To be robbed of an eternal future I can bear with resignation, but of my everlasting past I will not tamely suffer myself to be defrauded."

"BAUGY SUR CLARENS,
" *November 11, 1892.*

"You and Will will be pleased to know that I am an Honorary Fellow of Pembroke College. I was holding my head over the fumes of Himrod [asthma] powder yesterday, just before our midday dinner, when in comes Mother with a card she had received from Firth. He had written to her about her translation, but squeezed in between two lines that he had just heard at Pembroke of my election. The post of this morning brought a letter from the Master and others of congratulation, from Mr. Doble and Mr. Morfill. The Master writes: 'The College desirous of doing honour to one of its old members, and also to itself, at a stated general meeting a few days ago unanimously and in full College meeting elected you to an Honorary Fellowship. The feeling as to the very high order of your literary work, and especially in respect of your Johnsonian labours, was universal, and the College was of opinion that it merited the highest honour at its disposal. I wish that it carried with it some substantial recognition, but the Commissioners in their wisdom decreed otherwise.'

"I know how much you and Will will sympathise with me in the pleasure which I feel in being thus recognised by my old College. There is no formal distinction which I should value equally."

In November 1892 died Miss Maurice, the aunt who had come to live with Mr. Arthur Hill and his

children after her sister's death in the year 1839. Birkbeck Hill's love for her was little less than that of a son for his mother. Of her death he writes to Mrs. Ashley :—

“I felt that it was no loss to her to die, but that did not narrow the gap. I have lost one to whom I was the dearest, one who would rather have me by her than anyone else, one whose face always lightened up with pleasure whenever I came before her. Much as you all love me, your faces naturally and rightly turn more towards your husband or wife and your children than towards me. She, when she lost dear Grandfather, looked first towards me.”

TO MRS. ASHLEY.

“BAUGY SUR CLARENS,
“*January 5, 1893.*

“I am working at Dante, and feel as I have felt before, the want of an Italian Dictionary that should show the derivations from the Latin. To anyone who knows Latin it would be a great help if the derivation were always given. I suggested such a publication to the Delegates of the Clarendon Press, but I was told that while it was a desirable work they did not know the scholar who would undertake it. How dreadfully had dogmatic theology sunk man's heart when Dante placed Virgil, Homer, Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato in Hell. There he was forced to place them, as they were not baptized; he makes it, however, as painless as possible. Still more dreadful is it when he makes the inscription over the gate of Hell say, ‘Justice moved my high Maker. Supreme Wisdom and Primal Love

made me.' The thought of the wickedness of the teachers of the cruel God who condemns men to endless, horrible, and useless torment constantly moves me with indignation. I often think of raising my voice against them; the suffering they cause is terrible. Perhaps I shall some day write something, for it is a question I have much at heart. That they should not hide their guilt, but should hold up their heads as the teachers of righteousness and as the very elect, adds to my wrath. Such wicked doctrines, if taught at all, should be taught only as shameful mysteries, with the dread of public infamy hanging over the teachers if once they were detected. Instead of that, they sit in pulpits endowed by the State, and instead of being pelted with mud boldly wear their black hats and their black clothes and their white ties."

TO MISS CAROLINE KING.

"BAUGY, *March* 1893.

"We are really seriously thinking of visiting Cambridge, Massachusetts, this summer. I am hopeful that the great change will do both my wife and myself good. Perhaps the sight of a new world and a different life will send the blood more freely coursing through our veins. . . . What I have for many years been eager to study is your New England States. There are four great cradles of liberty in the world—so I reckon them—Greece, Holland, England, and New England. Switzerland's part, though a good one, was not large enough. Greece I have never seen, but New England I hope to visit soon. You know my opinion of George III. The war against him I always look upon as the continuation

of the war against Charles I. My sympathies are on the side of the *Englishmen* on both sides of the Atlantic who fought the good fight against the oppressor. I shall visit Lexington with the same feelings as I should visit Chalgrove.

"Then, too, the intellectual life of Boston and Harvard will I am sure greatly interest us. What progress Harvard is making! She strides while our Universities crawl. I have for some while been reading American authors—Lowell, Holmes, Emerson's Life by his son (a somewhat heavy book; I admire Emerson's character, but I am no Emersonian), and Motley's Life. I am now deep in Bryce's *America*. I have read Cabot Lodge's *Boston*, and shall soon begin Fiske. So I shall be ready on landing at once to return an answer to your question, 'How do you like our Constitution?'

"I am writing in bed before breakfast. Such a beautiful scene met my view as I drew the curtain of the window—the dawn striking the snow-clad mountains and the fleecy clouds above them, while the Lake lay peaceful beneath."

Birkbeck Hill's criticism of Mr. Bryce's book in the following letter is couched in the language he always used when he thought the English language was being abused. "*Vile* cockney" was a phrase familiar to his children from nursery days. However vigorous his abuse of the style, this book by an "Old Mortality" comrade was at any rate one he laid reluctantly down.

TO MRS. ASHLEY.

“BAUGY SUR CLARENS,
“*March 24, 1893.*

“Written from my bed just after the first rays of the sun had caught the top of the Dent du Midi.

“I am far in the second volume of Bryce's book [on America]. It is unequally written . . . it is, however, a work of great value and power, but I wish he had given himself a year longer in writing it, so as to have compressed it, as well as have polished it up to the dignity of history. It suffers from the many years he had of reviewing. Though he often writes very well indeed, yet he disgraces himself by dropping into such vile jargon as ‘it goes without saying.’ I have written to him to point out two errors in fact—for such I conceive them. He quotes Dunning's famous motion as ‘that the *power* of the Crown has increased,’ etc. It should have been *influence*. He says, too, that the judges have held their places for life ever since the Revolution. They held them only for the life of the king till 1761. One of the first two Georges, as I have pointed out in a note on Hume's *Letters*, did not reappoint on his accession one, and perhaps more, of the judges. I have not the book with me, and so could only quote from memory. I have noticed one or two other inaccuracies, but I should think that there are not many. It is curious how from time to time, after writing like an historian of England, he relapses into the Scotchman and talks of Britain. Britain of course is not correct at all, for it does not include Ireland, even if England were Britain, which happily it is not.”

"BAUGY SUR CLARENS,
" *March* 28, 1893.

"Bryce shamefully misquotes Boswell and misrepresents Johnson where he says, 'Dr. Johnson thought that if he had taken to politics he would have been as distinguished therein as he was in poetry.' What he said was, 'I could as easily apply to law as to tragic poetry' (*Boswell*, v. 35). Bryce's book is one of the most interesting that I have read for a long time, and I am sorry that I am just at the end."

CHAPTER XI

Visit to New England—An American supper—W. L. Garrison—A village on Cape Cod—Johnsonian treasures in America—American training for lawyers—An ancient American cookery book—An LL.D. of Williams College—A new home at Hampstead—An “editor of the Book of Life”—One of the party of “Peace, retrenchment, and reform”—A gift from Leonard Courtney—Trevelyan’s *Macaulay*—Simplicity in the Prussian army—*Harvard College by an Oxonian*—*Talks about Autographs*—The *Atlantic Monthly* versus “an editor’s thankless task.”

IN the spring of 1893 the plan often discussed was finally decided on. Dr. and Mrs. Hill were to spend the summer with their daughter, Mrs. Ashley, in her New England home. It was their first long voyage, and the thought of it filled Birkbeck Hill with the eager anticipation of an explorer. They sailed in a Boston boat, so as to avoid the long journey from New York. After some weeks spent in Cambridge, Mass., they and the Ashley family moved to Barnstable, in Cape Cod, for the hot weather. This American visit proved to be one full of new interests and new friendships, which were subsequently strengthened by a second visit in 1896. So strong was Dr. Hill’s interest in Harvard University that on his return to Europe, in the autumn of 1893, he set to work to write a book on the subject. This little volume, *Harvard College by an Oxonian*, met with a warm reception in New England.

The early part of his stay in New England was

sadly marred by continual asthma, but happily whilst at Barnstable he was induced to try the cure known as the Hayes System. In his case, at any rate, it proved most successful, and he became an ardent believer in the "Buffalo treatment." Increasing years brought many and increasing ailments, but from asthma he was comparatively free throughout the remaining ten years of his life.

Almost everything in America pleased him except their trains and their meals; both made him ill. Hence his criticism in the letter to Mrs Crump—a long way off the spirit of the Pembroke Freshman in 1856.

TO MRS. ASHLEY.

"BAUGY SUR CLARENS,

"April 7, 1893.

"The time is going by rapidly, and we shall soon be with you. Yesterday our ship, the *Cephalonia*, was to start for Boston; in her next voyage outwards she is to take us. When I arrive I shall have made two voyages to America, one in fact and the other in imagination, for I am always picturing it—the sight of the Welsh mountains and the Irish coast, the porpoises, the one whale spouting in the distance, the iceberg glittering in the sun, the abandoned ship that we come across, the shipwrecked crew that we pick up, the steamers that we pass, the bright sunny weather, the storm (a brief one), the talk at meals, the repartees I make to offensive passengers, the first sight of the New World in the distance, the rapid approach, till at last we are alongside Griffin's Wharf (whence they threw the tea into the sea), and the sight of you and Will waving your handkerchiefs. Then comes the drive to

Cambridge, and the dear little ones on the verandah, and little Darling's running to the gate and throwing her arms round my neck. You see I do not frighten myself with the misery of the voyage. We are going to have one day at most of sickness and nine of great pleasantness, full of interest, with the brightest of prospects and dearest of people at the end, let alone a new world."

TO MRS. CRUMP.

"MASS, U.S.A.

"We took supper, or rather tea, at a friend's last night. It is surprising what an uncomfortable and poor evening meal the Americans have. We were nine in all. A small dish of very fat corned beef cut in slices, a box of sardines, hot bread, slices of yesterday's bread, a little toast, butter, blue berries and pine-apple preserve. The Americans even in this hot weather eat a great deal of butter with their hot bread, and so get enough. I had to sup on the little lean I could cut out of the fat beef, on dry bread and toast, and a little of the pine-apple, washed down with hot water. It was neither a good enough meal in itself, nor was it a meal to ask a man to. I understand this is the ordinary American tea. Dana says that the cooking among the middle class and poorer people in America is the worst he knows, and he had travelled far. The bread, however, is excellent, being home-made, and bread goes a long way.

"You and Charlie would I think read with pleasure the Life of Richard Dana, the author of *Two Years before the Mast*. There is an account of his defence of a fugitive slave, and of the savage assault made

on him (Dana), and of the arrest and trial of his assailant—as strange a story as is to be found in any of Scott's novels. I am now reading the *Life of George Ticknor*, which begins well. The letters which he wrote from England and Göttingen in 1815-16 interest me a good deal. He was a weak-kneed creature on the slavery question, as I know from other books, and so I shall not care much for his later years. Prescott was also on the wrong side, which accounts for his admiration of those cold-blooded ruffians, Ferdinand and Isabella. He thought, moreover, that Motley judged Philip II. too harshly, as if anyone could judge that devil too harshly—not even Dante could have done that. One would almost wish for the river of boiling blood of the *Inferno* to have Philip, Bloody Mary, Bonner, Alva, and Torquemada floating in it. Jefferson Davis, too, and some of his crew I would give a few years' douse in it, with devils in the shape of negroes to keep them down with their long hooks."

TO HIS SON, NORMAN HILL.

"BARNSTABLE, *July* 28, 1893.

"... I do not know when I have been at a seaside place that I like so well. To constantly look upon the blue sea and at the same time to have grassy fields, shady trees, hills, and the clearest of skies is a great pleasure. Then, too, the road passes near to our house, so that as I sit in the verandah—piazza they always call it here—I see the people passing to and fro. There is generally a breeze—rather too strong a breeze—so that the heat is rarely great. I often have to keep the rug round my knees. . . . We are

fortunate in having an excellent public Library in the nearest house to ours, whence three times a week we can get out books. I have 'read like a Turk' since I came—almost altogether books about America. I have just finished four huge volumes of Garrison's Life, one of America's greatest men, whom I once heard when he was in London in 1866."

TO MRS. CRUMP.

"BARNSTABLE, U.S.A.,

"August 12, 1893.

"Sorry as I am to leave here, I shall be glad to be setting our faces homeward. I could not live in America. I long to see once more houses of brick and stone, and the old places and old things and old ways. If one had to draw lots in a new birth for one's native country, America would be every wise man's choice, for the average lot is far better. But the lot of a man of learning or of one of poetic or artistic feelings is far happier in the Old World. I shall be glad to have a good talk about books with Charlie and you. It is surprising what a great man Emerson is in New England—perhaps all over America. Emerson is one of the most tiresome of men, in spite of a certain amount of genius. You would like the Lives of Dana and of Ticknor and Prescott. Especially interesting to us are the letters and diaries they wrote during their visits to Europe. I am now reading Webster's Life, but it is ponderously written. The writer wants to say Webster's schoolmaster kept a small shop, 'He fulfilled the function of keeping a shop.' I

have had from Mr. Wendell Garrison, the Editor of the *Nation*, a copy of his Life of the great Garrison in four volumes. He sent it in reply to a letter I wrote to him about his father. I gave so much pleasure that another Mr. Garrison came to call on me last Sunday, a third has invited me to visit him at his house near Boston, while a fourth has sent me a lecture on Whittier. I hope some day to write about Garrison, who was really a great man—greater than a hundred Emersons put together, though Emerson undoubtedly had a large influence on the characters of thoughtful men here. His influence in England was, I think, infinitesimal.”

“BARNSTABLE, U.S.A.,

“August 21, 1893.

“On the southern side of Cape Cod there is a large hotel, holding 170 guests. The waiters, male and female, and the chambermaids, are mostly teachers and students from Amherst University. There are also four men from Harvard. The shoeblack last year was a medical student from New York, but this year he is the bath manager. The scullerymaids are from a lower class, and take their meals apart from the others, who have a mess to themselves. What an admirable side this is of American life, that without any loss of self-respect poor students can thus support themselves. Mr. Garrison says they do their work very well, and are always treated with courtesy by the guests. In fact, they would not submit to rudeness. The summer holidays at the parish schools are much longer than in England, so that the teachers can get posts for the whole, or at all events for the greater part, of the summer season.”

On the 30th August was born his grandson, Walter Ashley, about whose birth he wrote to his son Norman the following pretty letter. His friend at Buffalo was the late Mr. Adam, whose justly celebrated collection of MSS. Birkbeck Hill had visited with the deepest interest in the previous July.

TO HIS SON, NORMAN HILL.

“BARNSTABLE, MASS.,

“*August 31, 1893.*

“ . . . The little man could not have entered this world on a fairer evening. The great storm from the South with its heat had passed away, and whatever wind there was came from the North, so that the air was pleasant. There had been a fine sunset, and the sea had lain in a silvery calm. I had been off to an old lawyer's who lives hard by; Will rushed in with the news. As I came back the moon and stars were shining brightly, while in the north-east Jupiter was rising. A falling star shot across one end of the house. May the little man find the same peace and the same beauty in the world as welcomed him in! All our neighbours are very kind; we are indeed among a most friendly people—delightfully simple and entirely free from ostentation and self-consciousness. Mother has made friends all round, and is, I believe, the most popular person in Barnstable. I am wonderfully better, in spite of hot weather. I have no doubt that my Buffalo doctor is doing me great good. My weight has increased in five weeks from 125½ lbs. to 133. I am getting back to work again. I sent to the *Speaker* a review of the last part of Dr. Murray's

Dictionary. I am very busy, for I have lately received on loan from my Buffalo friend, a great Johnsonian collector, the proof sheets of Boswell's Life, corrected by Boswell himself. They were purchased the other day at the sale of the Auchinleck Library for £160, I think. I am copying down all the interesting alterations, having sent to Cambridge [Mass.] for a copy of my own *Boswell*. I shall make an article for some magazine. I have discovered what the cancels were that Boswell made at the request of Reynolds and W. G. Hamilton (see my *Boswell*, i. 520 and ii. 2, n. 1).

"Besides this I am collecting material for essays on W. L. Garrison, the great emancipator, and on the feelings of Americans towards England. I wish I could afford to buy a dozen or twenty books that I need; but I cannot. I am making extracts of all the passages I shall need. I should like a copying clerk. There is an excellent public Library here, and I have obtained leave to have out as many as ten books at a time. I can also get books from the Harvard Library.

"I have ascertained the method followed here about law students. There are no fees paid either to solicitors or barristers. Young men who enter their offices receive even a small salary, but they are required to work just as the other clerks. If they did not, they would be quickly sent away. No lawyer in any practice would receive a youth who had not been through the course of three years in the law school of one of the Universities. One of the assistant Professors in this school at Harvard tells me that in it nine men out of ten work really hard at their studies. They have most of them been through the Arts course and taken their B.A. In this course they may have been idle, but when they come to the Law course they feel that

serious life has begun, and they work with a will. When therefore they leave to enter an office they know a good deal of law. It is a better method than our plan.

“We like very much all that you tell us of your new house. It will indeed be pleasant after the voyage to be in one of our children’s homes again. Dear little Lettice must be a delightful companion—she was that before we left. Tell her that her Grandfather Hodge wants to see all her pets.”

“BARNSTABLE, MASS.,

“September 25, 1893.

“ . . . Yesterday I was very busy over the original proofs of Johnson’s *Life of Pope*, with the old fellow’s corrections on the margin. It is surprising how few there are of them, considering that he sent his first draft to the printer without any revision. The corrections would be few even for the most careful author, who had made one or two fair copies. Now that I am well my note-book takes up a good deal of my time, for I am getting together all the information I can, and observing also for myself. Then, too, I am copying out a great many passages from books in the Library on the relations of England and America in the war between the North and the South and on Slavery. I have even copied many recipes from a cookery book of 1685, which I found in one of the houses here. I hope to make an article for the *Speaker*. Try the following recipe. ‘How to cook apples. Take quoddling apples and quoddle them.’ There is more to follow, but till you have learnt how to do this there is little use in adding to the direction. It is curious that plum-pudding is not mentioned. The Americans do not make

it; this seems to show that it is an invention of the eighteenth century. I went to a trial for assault the other day, and was pleased to hear all the old English forms slightly changed, the Commonwealth (that is of Massachusetts) being substituted for the Crown. The judge, for instance, said, 'Let all the witnesses for the Commonwealth remain in court.' The lawyer for the Commonwealth spoke about 'the peace being broken on the Queen's—the King's highway.' The use of 'King's highway' was in itself curious, but that he should have corrected himself when he said 'Queen's' was more curious still. 'King's highway' no doubt comes down from the old days of the Colony. An old lawyer whom I asked about it tells me that the expression is not infrequently used. . . . We have indeed been fortunate in coming among such kindly, simple, well-informed people as the Barnstable folk. The village grocer is an excellent political economist, one who would have delighted Cobden and Bright; he talks uncommonly well, and is full of facts and apt illustration. Almost all the men we know—if not indeed all—have read a good deal; most of them have seen a great deal of the world, for Cape Codders go far and wide seeking their fortunes, so that subjects of conversation are never wanting.

"I daresay you have heard that I am to have 'the Doctorate' conferred on me at Williams College, on the celebration of its centenary on October 10. The College is at Williamstown, close to the boundary of Massachusetts and Vermont, among the hills, so that, if the weather favours us, we shall have some fine scenery to enjoy."

Dr. Hill was unable to go to Williamstown on account of ill - health, but on his second visit

to America, in 1896, the visit was successfully achieved.

During this visit to America their daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Crump, had found a house on Holly Hill, Hampstead, and thither Dr. and Mrs. Hill returned for a few weeks before settling into their Swiss winter quarters. The house was a modest one for a joint family, but it furnished Birkbeck Hill with a pleasant room for his books, his prints, his oak table made by William Morris just after undergraduate days, and the great old sofa from Bruce Castle. The loss of Oxford was a sad loss to him ; happily in Hampstead his health somewhat improved, his library was taken care of in his long enforced absences, the Heath gave him space for his morning walks, while the near neighbourhood of his nephew, Mr. Spencer Scott, gave him a companion whose tastes were identical with his own, and who had sufficient leisure to be his frequent companion.

TO MRS. ASHLEY.

“ 1 THE WILDERNESS, HAMPSTEAD.

“ Yesterday I watched a sham fight on Parliament Hill and Hampstead Heath. It was a pretty sight. In the end all the bodies of men formed into one, and marched off with the band playing at their head the most inspiring tune. How delightful military music is, and what life it puts into one ! I felt like the crowd around Wordsworth’s fiddler—and something of a Jingo too—at least like a John Bull. I thought of the end of Macaulay’s second article on Lord Chatham, where he describes how on his monument his outstretched arm ‘ bids England be of good cheer and hurl defiance at her foes.’ As the music died away I thought

of all the miseries suffered by many generations of Englishmen, and still not at an end, all caused by this defiance-hurling."

The following verses were suggested to Birkbeck Hill by the pretty answer of a child-friend :—

LINES TO A LITTLE GIRL.

"What! close your eyes, my darling child,
Your prayer unsaid!" "It's getting late,
I'm sleepy," Dorothy replied.
"I'll pray to-morrow. God can wait."

Yes, God can wait; His boundless love
Sweet innocence can never tire;
The child's pure silence mounts above
The chantings of the surpliced quire.

Before winter fogs began to gather, Dr. and Mrs. Hill returned to their farmhouse at Baugy. They had with them a pleasant young companion throughout this winter, the daughter of a Cape Cod friend, Miss Louisa Cobb. Birkbeck Hill was busy with a new book, *Harvard College by an Oxonian*, a subject on which he had gathered copious notes, and with which he was greatly interested. Faithful lover of Oxford as he was, he yet felt that she might learn much from the younger University as well as teach something. His book is not only a history of Harvard, but is also a carefully drawn contrast between the two systems of education.

TO MRS. ASHLEY.

"BAUGY SUR CLARENS,
"January 28, 1894.

"I heard from Mr. Garrison of the *Nation* yesterday. A copy of Uncle F.'s memoirs had been sent to him in my name. He is going to have it reviewed. He says that he thinks 'England more

than any other country can show careers of energy and goodness and active benevolence. How much,' he adds, 'my father felt at home in this philanthropic stratum of English society.' It is indeed cheering as one reads Uncle's memoirs to see the vast change for the good that has in his lifetime been effected by good men. The Benthamites did a noble work in their day. As Mother and I this evening sat in the firelight I began to talk of the old stock, and said how thankful I felt that it did not seem likely to degenerate in our grandchildren."

"BAUGY SUR CLARENS,
"February 4, 1894.

"Yesterday evening Mother was saying to Louisa that she did not think that she should like nothing but hymn-singing in heaven, and then she added, 'I wonder what Father will do there.' 'Edit the Book of Life,' I replied. Do you not think that infinite happiness would be provided for me? How about printer's devils, though? Our Shakespearean readings go on every evening, I being the reader. How reading aloud brings out the beauties of the play—at least to the reader. The other day I picked up an odd volume of Corneille for a few pence and have just read the *Cid*, which I had not read since I was a boy. With all the fineness of its versification how infinitely inferior to Shakespeare!—it is all played on a single string and that a poor one. He seems to me to have very little knowledge of mankind. I wonder if you will hear what our Bench of Bishops have done—they have struck out the clause that enabled Parish Councils to meet in the schoolhouses, and sent them to the public-houses, following Lord Salisbury's lead, who laughed at the objection to use public-houses as puri-

tanical. These Bishops are a base set. I should like to threaten them with the danger that we shall take possession of their churches for our meetings. If I were in Parliament I should propose a clause to that effect."

TO HIS SISTER, MRS. SCOTT.

"BAUGY SUR CLARENS, SWITZERLAND,

"*February* 18, 1894.

"If you had received a letter every time I have thought of writing one you would have been overdone by them. My book on Harvard keeps me so steadily employed that by the time I have finished my daily task I have had enough of pen and ink. It is making good progress, and will, I hope, have a pretty good sale in America at all events.

"I did not like Lord Rosebery's answer to the address of the Anti-Slavery Society. I do not know what the difficulties are, but there must be some. Often the French throw obstacles in the way of our suppression of the Slave Trade. I am never satisfied with our foreign policy, and greatly regret that the Liberals, when in office, think it needful to follow so much the same policy as the Tories. Lord Salisbury's policy has often been a very bad policy—especially as regards Turkey and Russia. I am alarmed at the constant extension of our Empire; it is only a source of weakness, not of strength. You did not seem to have noticed in the *Times* you sent me in the next column to the Anti-Slavery Address, 'The Operations in Nyassaland'—a tale of great wickedness very calmly and complacently told. Some tribe out there had refused to pay their taxes; so we sent a force to burn down their villages. I wonder in what code of laws

it is lawful to raise taxes by burning whole villages. It is stated that the people had not harmed the missionaries who were living near them. The war in Mashonaland seems to me a very wicked one, made by a set of ruffians bent on getting goldfields. Lobengula no doubt was a cruel ruler, but according to the Bishop's account there was no need to go to war with him. He knew our strength, and was afraid of us. Had we settled the country adjoining his peacefully, his people would have been gradually civilised in all likelihood. Now some thousands of them are killed, and the survivors, I see, are thought to be escaping northwards, going to burst on some defenceless race and massacre them and take their lands. What we could stop, we do not stop. We could stop the English importation into Africa of the most poisonous spirits. Norman says there is a vast trade in them from Liverpool.

"I have not read the debates on the Employer's Liability Bill, and scarcely any of those on the Parish Councils. Now that by obstruction the debates are dragged out to such intolerable lengths I cannot follow them. I do not like the interference with liberty in the Employer's Liability Bill, but I have scarcely examined the question. A new world of social life has begun since we were young, and I have never taken the trouble to study it. I belong to the old school of 'Peace, retrenchment, and reform.' However, not studying it, I do not pretend to judge of it. I see that Maurice and Will Ashley, who have given a great deal of thought to it, form conclusions different from those in which we were brought up. I quite admit the possibility that they are right. If I were to attempt to understand this new world I should have no strength or time for the work that I can do."

TO MRS. ASHLEY.

“BAUGY SUR CLARENS,
“*February* 21, 1894.

“I enclose a copy of an inscription in a book out of the Auchinleck Library which Mr. Courtney has kindly sent me. I was not a little touched by what he says. I shall at last have something in Boswell’s handwriting—not much, but a great deal better than nothing.”

This book of Boswell’s is a beautifully bound copy, in folio.

DI
LUCREZIO CARO
DELLA NATURA DELLE COSE
LIBRI VI
TRADOTTI IN VERSO TOSCANO
DA
ALESSANDRO MARCHETTI

and is dedicated to Pasquale Paoli. On the fly-leaf at the top is written in Boswell’s handwriting, “James Boswell, London 1781, A Present from General Paoli.”

Below this comes the inscription which “touched Birkbeck Hill not a little.”

“This book dedicated to Paoli
and by him given to Boswell
(as Boswell has himself commemorated)
is now, after more than a century,
given again
to the most diligent and devoted of editors
G. BIRKBECK HILL
as a mark of friendship and of affectionate sympathy by
LEONARD COURTNEY.
10 *Feb.* 1894.”

The book has passed into the hands of Birkbeck Hill's eldest son, Maurice, to be kept as a treasure in the family. Mr. Courtney [now Lord Courtney of Penwith] was a friend of many years' date. Memories of wild games in the hayfield at Bruce Castle linger vividly in the mind of at least one of Birkbeck Hill's children. "Brown-eyed Mr. Courtney" was the nickname bestowed on him by little Walter Hill; the adjective became an integral part of the name, and was always shouted with joy by the children when they caught sight of Mr. Courtney coming across the summer lawns.

When in 1903 Birkbeck Hill lay wearily ill for many hopeless weeks scarce a Saturday passed without a visit from this old friend.

The summer of 1894 was passed mainly in Hampstead, where he found a great deal to abuse in the smoky skies and gardens that made his hands black when he tried to weed. London he never did like, and clear sunshine was always an exquisite joy to him, so that his not inconsiderable powers of humorous abuse had plenty on which to vent itself. Nor in 1894 was the little grandson born who later brought a sunshine of the heart in which to bask. In October he was back again in Switzerland.

TO MRS. ASHLEY.

" 1 THE WILDERNESS, HAMPSTEAD,

" *September 22, 1894.*

"I have been reading in Macaulay's Life the last few days, skipping all Trevelyan's work, or almost all, and reading the letters and extracts, which happily form the bulk of the work. They please me as much

as they did the first time I read them. Trevelyan's work is very unequal, never very good—generally moderately good. I commonly read a little in South's Sermons every day. They are interesting not only on account of their strong and manly style, but also as exhibiting the character of a High Churchman and Royalist of the Restoration. From Jesus of Nazareth he and his seven volumes are as far as Dan is from Beersheba. He is a kind of clerical Cobbett or O'Connell in the strength and roughness of his language and the violence of his prejudices."

"BAUGY SUR CLARENS,

"October 26, 1894.

"Our Swiss home once more. So delightful a morning, the sun pouring in at the open window, as it never poured in at Hampstead all the summer, the air beautifully pure and clear, the Dent du Midi at its best, the trees all yellow, and our four cows in the meadows below ringing their bells as if to welcome us. Our home looked bare enough when we entered it, though there was a large basket of excellent grapes, flowers and flowering plants, sent us by the Von Sydows to welcome us. Suzette, our maid, greeted us with a friendly and well-known face. We did not get much unpacked the first afternoon, but yesterday we began after breakfast, and by tea-time felt that we were no longer in a strange land. Mother had brought a few more pictures. How I wish that you could see the walls! We have likenesses of you all, children and children-in-law and grandchildren about the room, so that you are constantly in our thoughts—not that pictures are needed to keep you there. Little Darling's

[Annie Ashley] face is often with me as I walk or sit reading. How dear she is to me !”

“ BAUGY SUR CLARENS,
“ *November 2, 1894.*

“ We are jogging along very pleasantly here so far. The pure air and the clear skies are a great enjoyment in themselves after smoky Hampstead, with its dull horizon. The carpet and hearthrug which Mother has brought from our Oxford house add much to the look of our sitting-room. Altogether it is a snug little place, and pretty too. The books which we brought have swollen our library so that it has overflowed into the gallery. We hear that A—— has become a Roman Catholic. This comes of what B—— did to him a few years ago, when he violently upset all his religious beliefs and made him an infidel, to use Johnson’s words, ‘as a dog is an infidel.’ That is to say, he arrived at atheism or agnosticism not by the narrow way through the gate but over the wall. Unless a man has been brought up as John Mill was, these short cuts and violent changes scarcely last. The two lads were presuming to pronounce dogmatically on matters which age after age have perplexed the greatest minds, and to which these minds have given answers wide as the poles asunder. Neither of them had any knowledge of the history of man’s mind. A—— with an enthusiastic nature has, it is clear, been suffering under this for some time, and now he has gone the full circle round. Of course if he lives he will not remain a Catholic—two or three years, I should think, will open his eyes to the enormous evils worked by that hateful system, the great enemy of liberty and virtue. I should not, however, feel any regret were I to know that for a few years he were to

remain an untroubled believer. When he emerges from the slough he should come forth with a nobler mind and a well-grounded faith."

"BAUGY SUR CLARENS,
"November 8, 1894.

"We have heard an instance of the great simplicity of life of the Prussian officers—those of the older generation. Colonel von Sydow, who had tea with us a few days ago, told us that General von Caprivi, who has just resigned the Chancellorship of the German Empire, has come alone to Clarens—he is a bachelor, unattended even by a man-servant—and has taken a small room on the second floor of the Pension Lorins, for which, I suppose, he pays about seven francs. The Colonel tells me of the great simplicity of life in the army when he himself was a young officer. He lived on £3 a month; the mess dinner cost sixpence. They never took wine except on the King's birthday, when each officer indulged in a small bottle of champagne. I asked him whether the present Emperor does not inculcate economy. He replied that he does so theoretically, but that he does not know what twenty marks can buy."

"BAUGY SUR CLARENS,
"December 9, 1894.

"I fear that your love does not allow you to hold the balance quite evenly, and that you see greater merits than readers generally will discover [in *Harvard College by an Oxonian*]. I know that I had given months of hard work to my book and that I had written it from my heart, yet I could not be sure how far I had succeeded. Now I know I have done well.

If only I can do something towards bringing peace on earth, goodwill towards men, I shall indeed be happy. The older I grow the more I hate war and strife and the unjust and ungenerous feelings entertained by one race towards another. I do hope that I may live to see the American students at our Universities and our students at theirs. . . . You cannot imagine what a turkeycock sort of feeling came over me when I heard of the pile of fifty copies of my book in one store. I am quite sure that never before were a dozen copies of any work of mine gathered together. Why did you not have the pile photographed? Where did it stand? All in one pile on the counter? Did you proclaim yourselves as the 'pile's' children? Mother and I talk of what we shall do with the dollars that will come pouring in. I hope the American currency and credit will hold out till I am paid. Of course the Boston and Cambridge [Massachusetts] sale will be far larger than in any other towns, so that I must not form too great expectations, though fifty!!! copies in one shop—store I will say in compliment to the worthy proprietor—looks promising. Assuming that in New England alone there are a thousand stores—but I will not yield to the seductive vision of the potentiality of wealth beyond the dreams of avarice. However, whatever good comes to us, in it our dear children shall have their share."

"BAUGY SUR CLARENS,

"*December 13, 1894.*

"What a wonderful day this Christmas is! Here am I, an old fellow, writing in bed before dawn on a frosty winter morning, with Christmas nearly a fortnight off, and scarcely able to see what I am writing, because my eyes have become dimmed with tears at

the thought of all the love of that day and of you so far away. Much as we shall miss you, dear Mother and I shall keep cheerful ; for we have much reason for happiness when we think on our dear and loving children and grandchildren, sons-in-law and daughters-in-law.

"Our happiness has been greatly increased by the way my book has been received. On Monday we received the newspapers Will sent, with the glorious passages scored. I do not think that any review of any one of my books—not even Andrew Lang's notice of my *Boswell*—pleased me so much as the one in the *Boston Advertiser*. I do indeed wish it could be true that, in the writer's words, my book has endeared me to every cultivated American. Professor Goodwin wrote most kindly. 'I am more than delighted with your book,' he says. 'Much that you tell is new to most people in this country, even to most of us in Cambridge' (Mass.). He signs himself 'yours gratefully.'

"Dec. 20. We liked to know that the success of my book makes you 'very happy and the son-in-law too.' Then one hundred copies in the Co-operative Store! one hundred! and the bookshops with their windows full of copies. How I should like *carelessly* to walk in front of them, and *carelessly* to go into a shop, and *carelessly* to lay my hand on a copy, and to hear the wise and judicious and candid and amiable and delightful bookseller talk!"

"BAUGY SUR CLARENS,

"January 10, 1895.

"The last few days I have been much enjoying Horace. . . . What a fine blend Horace makes with the Gospels! The best of his writings are a comment on the text 'Take no thought for the morrow,' and a fine

commentator is the old heathen. I know that I got from him a good deal of wisdom. He is, however, a poor teacher if taken alone ; but the freedman's son has his use in modifying the teaching of the son of the carpenter."

"BAUGY SUR CLARENS,
"February 21, 1895.

"Mother is reading aloud Mr. Gilman's *Boston*—there is much that is interesting in it, but on the other hand there is a spirit of error running through at all events the history of the seventeenth century from his writing with all the feelings of a New Englander after the Revolution. He never understands that the settlers and their descendants for some generations were Englishmen. How different is Mr. Fiske's *Beginnings of New England*—an admirable book in my judgment. My reading is varied, for Mother is also reading aloud Mrs. Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters*, which I did not know before, while I give my leisure to *Wilhelm Meister* and Dumas. I nearly finished Horace, reading most of the old fellow twice over ; then I needed a change. Dumas I had hardly ever read before. What a wild and daring romancer he is ! It is a pity that he had not a little more self-restraint. He works up a scene almost to the same intensity as Scott himself, and then too often, by over-straining, suddenly is ridiculous. Now and then in the midst of his finest passages I have to close the book because it has become absurd."

"BAUGY SUR CLARENS,
"February 28, 1895.

"My mother's mother's maiden name was Bache ; the old lady always said that she was related to the

Bache who married Franklin's daughter, Sally. She also said that she was of Huguenot origin. The Baches must have come to England very early, for some of that name were among the first Quakers. I have at home among my papers a few facts about the Baches, but not many. Kentish Bache told me that he had been discouraged in his attempt to trace his kindred, for any Baches he turned up always wanted half-crowns from him. The family had been Presbyterians, but became Unitarians. Between fifty and sixty years ago a Professor Bache of the United States came to Bruce Castle. My father spoke of him to me as a distant relation."

A letter written by this Mr. A. D. Bache to Mr. Arthur Hill, and docketed by him, "A grandson of Dr. Franklin, and Principal of Gerard College," still exists. It is dated April 29th, 1837, and accepts in warm terms an invitation to Bruce Castle.

During the winter of 1894-1895, Birkbeck Hill undertook to write a series of articles for the *Atlantic Monthly*, of which his friend Mr. Scudder was editor. The subject chosen was a set of papers on the small collection of Autographs, which was perhaps Birkbeck Hill's most cherished possession. These papers were afterwards published in book form under the title of *Talks about Autographs*. The book is full of glimpses into his own life, his opinions, and anecdotes of people he had known. It was a pleasant book to write, and it was done in pleasant circumstances.

"It has been," he wrote to Mr. Doble, "a pleasant piece of work. Why should I pursue an editor's thankless task, with its poor pay and public neglect?" That he did not, however, intend to give up the great task he had set himself is clear from the

following letter to Mr. Doble. Editing was at all times his refuge in sad circumstances or in dreary days of ill-health and bad weather, and there were enough of these to keep him faithful, even had his love of Johnson ever shown any flagging.

TO MR. DOBLE.

"May 26, 1895.

"I am drawn two ways, for the Editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* wants me to prepare a series of six articles for next year. The pay is so good that I am strongly tempted. For my five *Talks on Autographs*, all now in his hands, I shall receive about £125 or £130. . . . The money is made somewhat easily, and is very convenient just at present. This must be my excuse if, for a time, I desert the paths of learning. I can honestly say with Browning—

'I have laboured somewhat in my time,
And not been paid profusely.'

If this winter I had had my books with me, I could have got the Johnsonian volumes finished, for during the severe cold, when for two months my fancy was frozen and I could not write a line, I should have been able to do an editor's work."

CHAPTER XII

Deeply affected by the Bible—Visit to Ashbourne—What can take the place of religious teaching?—J. A. Symonds—George Eliot, a “novelist of a passing phase of thought”—Admiration for Cobden—Religious painters of Florence—Second visit to America—A game of baseball—Projected edition of *Lives of the Poets*—*Gil Blas* and *Robinson Crusoe*—A Colonial Bishop’s view of natives—Chamberlain too good a hater—*Life of Jowett*—Drinks versus books.

TO MRS. ASHLEY.

“WIMBLEDON, *August 24, 1895.*

“I am affected by the Bible and the Prayer-Book as I am affected by other great books, only in a higher degree, as they are far more familiar and go back in my life to a time earlier than memory. On the other hand, their beauties have been often marred by the base uses to which they have been put by priests and Pharisees. Some two or three years ago there was a discussion in one of the London papers about which were the most touching passages in books. Some absurd passages were cited. If I were to cite the lines which affect me most I think they would be two or three verses in the *Dies Iræ* :—

‘Qui Mariam absolvisti,
Et latronem exaudisti,
Mihi quoque spem dedisti.

Quaerens me, sedisti lassus :
Redemisti, crucem passus :
Tantus labor non sit cassus.’

The tears often have come into my eyes as I have repeated these lines to myself. There is that deep religious feeling, which has nothing to do with creeds and beliefs, which is shocked and wounded by priest-craft, which is chilled and depressed by churches and chapels, even by cathedrals, but which is awakened by nature, by the starry heavens, by noble passages of great writers, and by the thought of man's nothingness, and yet of his wonderful nature, with its depths and heights of sorrow, of happiness, of knowledge and of ignorance. It so happened that in my musings of late I had been thinking that if I had to bring up children again, I should every day read to them some noble passage, as at school the Bible and Prayer-Book used twice a day to be read. I should not keep to these two, though probably I should far more often select from them than from other authors, for they are more easily understood and are in such noble words. I can clearly see what great good I did really get from so constantly hearing the service read, marred though it so greatly was by the great length, the tedious repetitions, and the miserable sermons. I do not see what is to supply that foundation of great thoughts which rises up in us from our familiarity with the great thinkers and poets of the Bible. With noble minds and great thoughts we ought to be familiarised from childhood. The Greeks had their Homer, but we have no one book. Well, this is a big subject into which I have strayed."

"LIVERPOOL, *September* 21, 1895.

"With — one of the firm left a set of blank cheques all signed. One day he filled up one of these with the sum—but this demands a new page—£130,000!! He

brought the money to the office in notes, mostly for £1000 each. I asked him in what pocket he put them; in his trouser pocket he answered, to my surprise. I related old Mr. Hiorns' story of the sailor who came into a fortune, and had a cheque-book given him, with explanations how to draw one. He drew one for £5, exclaiming, 'There's a sweater for them!'"

"THE GREEN MAN AND BLACK'S HEAD HOTEL,
"ASHBOURNE, DERBYSHIRE,
"September 28, 1895.

"I came here last night for a Johnson Club Supper, but find scarcely anyone is coming. Birrell, however, is to arrive to-night. . . . I have come a day earlier, as the Scribe informed us we were invited to lunch at Ilam Hall. Ilam you will find described in vols. iii. and v. of my *Boswell*. Johnson's comparison of it with Hawkestone in vol. v., though in Johnsonian language and altogether out of harmony with the present mode of writing about scenery, is nevertheless instructive and true to nature essentially.

"Yesterday evening, being all alone, I strolled out to explore, and soon arrived at the old church—a very fine building indeed. (Look at the Index of my *Boswell* under 'Ashbourne' for the church, and read his expression of thankfulness to the pious founders.) The bell was ringing for the evening service, and some of the great windows were lighted up. I went in, and was present at a churching of a woman, with which we began the regular service, and the christening of two children. Elsie Ann and John Alexander behaved very well on their admittance at this somewhat late hour into the fold, and in spite of a liberal sprinkling of water, a separate dash for

each person of the Trinity. The church was decorated with flowers and fruits for the harvest festival, the choir sang well, the priests had good voices, and the old service was as beautiful as ever, the more so as the psalms for the evening of the 27th are very fine. I thought how wonderful it would be if the Church *lost* its hold on the people. It is only the apish tricks, the folly and the priestcraft of the clergy that can do this. It struck me as I witnessed the three services and the beautiful old building that the church is one of the greatest works of the imagination that man has ever struck out—a poem almost unsurpassed for beauty, though far too often spoilt by bad actors and by the interpolation of dull scenes. As I came out the moon was shining, and the stars were shining too—with their usual English dimness. I wandered about, tracing out as well as I could in the dim light some Johnsonian scenes. I fixed on Dr. Taylor's house without much difficulty, for I knew it faced the Grammar School. I found the stream in which there was an artificial waterfall by the side of which Johnson read Erasmus's *Militis Christiani Enchiridion* ('the hansom weapon of a Chrystæn Knight'), and down which, when Johnson had failed in the attempt, Boswell managed to put down the dead body of a large cat. How strange it is that I should be here visiting these places merely because they were visited more than a hundred years ago by these two men! It was at the end of September 1777 that Boswell spent ten days or so here with Johnson, and saw Dr. Taylor, looking like 'a hearty English squire with the parson superinduced,' and 'his upper servant Mr. Peters, a decent grave man in purple clothes and a large white wig, like the butler or major domo of a bishop.'

" 1 THE WILDERNESS, HAMPSTEAD,

" *October 19, 1895.*

"The whole question of some kind of religious service or of reading portions of Scripture and parts of the liturgy is to me a puzzling one. On one side there is in me what Johnson called his 'obstinate rationality,'—it prevented him from becoming a Catholic,—on the other is the world of emotions and memories and poetry. These two sides are wide asunder—sometimes one is up, sometimes the other. Then there comes the purely literary question, when I look upon the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer as the finest training to be had in the use of one of the noblest tongues; when I see that without it the beauties of all our greatest writers can be but imperfectly understood. I might add that the motives and actions of many of our greatest men, and even of whole ages, without it are never fully comprehended. Priestcraft in every form I hate, and dogma I laugh at. At the same time I can admire the imagination of long ages in slowly bringing forth from dreamland the whole scheme of Christianity, with its shadowy world and its shadowy hosts, and the grand reconciliation between God and man by the atonement. It is a very noble poem, but it is of such stuff as dreams are made of. I have sometimes thought of writing two dialogues or essays, in one of which should be set forth all the good religion has done, the consolations and happiness and courage and patience and strenuous virtue it has brought—the liberty it has achieved; and on the other hand, all the misery and oppressions and persecutions, and idle terrors of the unseen, and ignorance and tyranny it has produced. Who could hold the balance evenly?"

“ 64 BANBURY ROAD, OXFORD,
“ *November 6, 1895.*

“ Mother will have told you of my bronchitis. For three days only the attack was at all severe, and then not nearly so severe as often. . . . Horatio Symonds has lent me the *Life of J. A. Symonds*. I skipped, I must admit, many of the descriptions of scenery, for a man of sixty may be pardoned if he gives little time to the descriptions of a youth of one-and-twenty or not much more. There is much that was noble in Symonds's character—great courage and industry through a life of prolonged illness and suffering. Nevertheless, his was not a wholesome nature. I know nothing of his writings except those contained in this book, which in fact is almost all his, for it is made up of an autobiography and extracts from his letters. He was morbidly self-conscious from childhood, and suffered from that introspection which I heard preached up in my undergraduate days, but which happily for myself I always despised—or at least utterly neglected. Towards the close of his life he wrote to a friend in vile mongrel English, ‘Self-effectuation is the sole business of an individuality.’ This ‘self-effectuation’ appears often in one way or another in his life. A man with a sound healthy mind no more troubles his thoughts about ‘self-effectuating’ himself, than the man with a sound healthy digestion troubles himself about the operations of his stomach on the food he shall put into it. I can imagine an ‘individuality’ of Symonds's school saying, ‘I have self-effectuated myself of late too much on my moral side; the animal side has sunk into the background. Let my sole business be for this evening to get drunk; likely enough I may wake up to-morrow with a splitting headache, but on the road to

perfection a splitting headache must be endured.' Symonds clearly suffered from that 'fatal fluency' which has ruined many a writer. He wrote far too easily. To judge from this book I should not think that anything of his is likely to last. One of his greatest idols was Whitman. George Eliot he seems to think the greatest of novelists. With me such a belief is the severest sentence. She is the novelist of a passing phase of thought, I am convinced, and a writer of no great power. You see there is not much the matter with me when I write you an essay instead of a letter. . . . I never get reconciled to the most unscholarly education which I received. Nevertheless, I think that in one point I gained. This gain was once more brought before me by a passage in which Symonds writing of the College essays says, 'Aspirants after honours were habituated to deal cleverly with words and phrases, and to criticise without substantial knowledge.' I had none of this training, and I am glad of it. I remember thinking that in our Old Mortality Society the essays were rather words than thoughts or facts."

The severe illness by which Birkbeck Hill was unluckily attacked whilst on a visit to Sir John and Lady Burdon Sanderson, warned him to leave England. The farm at Baugy had been given up, for the long and bitter winter in the preceding year had proved more than Mrs. Birkbeck Hill's health would bear. Happily a pleasant little villa at Alassio was very kindly placed at their disposal by Mr. Rathbone. Thither went Birkbeck Hill just before the Christmas of 1895.

TO HIS SON, NORMAN HILL.

“ALASSIO, *January* 1, 1896.

“What a troubled time we have in public affairs!—very sad to find how much our country is hated. It is the natural fruit of this hateful Imperialism—this vile Jingoism. I wish many of the colonies were cut adrift from us. It would be far better for us, and I daresay for them. South Africa will cause us a deal of trouble before it is separated.”

“ALASSIO, *February* 19, 1896.

“I am reading Morley’s *Cobden*, and have sent for more books—Cobden’s speeches among them. What a noble heart he had, and what a clear, strong head! He had his limits, but whose horizon is boundless? How much England belongs now to the Manchester School! Lord Palmerston’s insolent meddling and the balance of power are things of the past. It is only fifty years since we were on the brink of war with France because a Frenchman married a Spanish woman. Cobden, more than any other man, rendered such folly impossible. What glory, too, to have driven away famine from his country! I remember my childish delight in watching the downpour of rain in the autumn of 1845—the rain which swept away by starvation hundreds of thousands of the Irish, and killed tens of thousands of English by slower privation. The servants’ yard at Bruce Castle got flooded one Saturday. I remember seeing the tops of a pair of high boots standing out of the water by the room where the shoeblack worked. Then, too, I remember how we gave what we could spare for Ireland—each boy doing

his best. We gave up an 'excursion' outing and sent the money to buy food. All this keeps up in my mind a never-failing feeling of gratitude to Cobden and his fellow-workers in the six weeks' crusade. I wish Italy had a Cobden. The poor fishermen are worse dressed than any decent English scarecrow. They work hard; I have never seen any of them drunk, but they are miserably poor. Our cook's son belongs to a crew that last week had each for his share 35 centesimi—threepence halfpenny. This week they are doing well, for the fish are on the coast. There is one old fellow who looks like what a Moorish slave must have looked—so brown. He works the best of all—is first to jump into the water to pull the boat in, and last to jump into the boat when they are pushing off. Then when they have got her on to dry land and are dragging her higher up, he runs to the stern and begins to shove, giving the time with 'O—O—hist.' We are going to buy the old fellow a new cardigan,—his is deplorably shabby. Their trousers may be of any age—a hundred years old, perhaps, for as they are all of patches no one can tell whether any part of the original garment is in them."

"ALASSIO, *March 4, 1896.*

"Yesterday's post brought a kind letter from Mr. Scudder [Editor of the *Atlantic Monthly Magazine*]. I please him, at all events, by my articles. He says: 'I have read these Rossetti Letters with delight, and with exceeding satisfaction the commentary. You have edited them with so much vivaciousness that the whole contribution has an integrity not often found in similar instances, for usually the editor's formality has to serve as a kind of foil.' He is, he says, 'so eager to

begin the series,' that he cannot let me have a proof of the first article. It is a great pity that while I have so many subjects on which I should like to write, and such a fund of knowledge and personal memory on which to draw, that I am for so large a part of each year incapacitated by health. I wish I had in me more of that 'vivaciousness' which Mr. Scudder finds in my articles."

From Alassio Dr. and Mrs. Hill went on to Florence. His impressions of the place and its works of art were perfectly untrammelled by opinions generally accepted, or at least acquiesced in, by the world. Of Florence itself he says, "I am saying nothing about Florence. It is impossible to do it justice. Yesterday we saw Fiesole, and looked down from above it into the ruins of the amphitheatre, and were almost overwhelmed by the abysm of time."

In the art galleries his judgments were guided rather by his opinion of the subjects they depicted than on their technique. He studied *men* not *art*, and he believed the majority of religious pictures had a bad effect both on the hearts and intellects of men.

TO MRS. ASHLEY.

"FLORENCE, *April* 1, 1896.

"How unfortunate it is that the greatest painters worked on such few subjects, and so often on such hateful scenes of cruelty! However beautiful and varied the paintings are, one cannot but wish that there had been much less baby worship, and tens of thousands fewer people with shaven crowns and clasped hands looking heavenwards. What a relief it is in these religious pictures to see someone *doing* something—unless perchance it is a devil torturing some poor sinner."

At the beginning of the summer of 1896 Dr. and Mrs. Birkbeck Hill sailed for their second visit to America. This time Cambridge was a city of friends and kindly welcome, but there are few letters to record his pleasure in the society of such men as President Eliot, Mr. Justin Winsor, and Mr. James Ford Rhodes, the able historian of the United States. Of Professor Child he writes in the following letter to Mrs. Crump.

The latter part of their stay was passed in Mount Desert Island, off the coast of Maine, and a letter of his wife's serves to give a pleasant picture of their life there. Some visits, too, they paid to friends, the most notable of which was a visit to Williams University, where Birkbeck Hill went to receive the honorary degree of LL.D. But all are unrecorded, for he had determined to take his summer as a holiday, and wrote but rarely.

TO MRS. CRUMP.

"CAMBRIDGE, MASS., U.S.A.,

"*June* 1896.

"Life in Cambridge is very pleasant, for there is a great deal of friendliness, an absence of ostentation and affectation and cynicism, and much learning without display. I like old Professor Child as much as anyone I have met here—I daresay Charlie knows his great collection of ballads. He is a real scholar, and a most kindly one, too. I find more men here to interest me by their talk than in Oxford. So far I have heard no gossip. Professor Child told me of the old President of Harvard in his student days who one day at prayers prayed, 'O Lord, make the intemperate temperate, and the industrious —dustrious.'

"I saw the latter part of the great match at base-

ball between Harvard and Yale. Though the admission to the field was half a dollar and to the seats on stands a dollar extra, there were many thousands present, perhaps seven or eight. I only got glimpses of the game over men's shoulders. It was the old game, at which I had played as a boy, refined. To the spectators it is full of surprises, sudden triumphs and defeats, and is easily understood, but it is as inferior to cricket as skittles is to billiards. The cheering was to me tiresome, as it was so mechanical, being led by conductors, and kept up for many minutes without interruption—in fact, I might almost say for half an hour—very different from the sudden clapping of hands which runs round the cricket field at a great hit, and subsides into perfect silence as the bowler takes up the ball and begins to bowl. It was a curious sight at the end, when Harvard just won the game, to see thousands of spectators stream towards the conquering heroes, seize them up, and bear them at a run on their shoulders."

"CAMBRIDGE, MASS.,

"June 16, 1896.

"The Boston paper taken in here is a contemptible thing, like most American papers. It contains scarcely any English news; for instance, this morning there is nothing except the arrival of the Yale Crew and an action by a milliner against Lady ——. Maurice sent us a *Daily Chronicle* containing a leader on my *Rossetti Letters*, as well as a whole page of reviews and articles on art. It was a contrast to this miserable *Boston Herald*. One page is fair enough—the page containing their leading articles. The political tone of the paper is good; it is the scraps or rather the pellets of news which insult the intelligence."

The following letter was written by Mrs. Birkbeck Hill :—

“ SOUTH-WEST HARBOUR,

“ MAINE, U.S.A.,

“ *August 5, 1896.*

“ DEAR MRS. SANDERSON,—We are on a creek running up from a bay of the sea so surrounded by islands that the surf never beats upon our shore, and nothing like a wave is to be seen unless a storm from the S.E. assails us. Were it not for the tide we must believe ourselves on the shores of a mighty and most beautiful lake. When that goes down, beds of seaweed of a lovely orange colour are left, and these contrast with the wooded shores of fir and birch and oak in a most lovely way. The shore is deeply indented, and every creek and bay has a name of its own, and we have exploring parties to first one and then another, taking lunch or tea in the boat, and lighting our lamp upon the strand. Our little house is of wood, as every house in this part of the world, and has a grand wide piazza where are two hammocks and sundry rocking chairs and a little table, and here we spend a great part of our time. Our ‘yard’ is a rough rocky hill leading to the house, on which grow a few firs and beds of blue berry and dwarf juniper, with tall nodding golden rod and white asters, and here we find small green snakes, and innumerable grasshoppers and katydids. Our only garden flowers are nasturtiums, but I have vases of wild flowers and foliage so beautiful that I have no envy of yours. . . . We live mainly on home-made bread and cakes, fish such as blue fish, sword fish, mackerel and halibut, also poultry, milk, and eggs. The butcher’s visits are spasmodic, and you take what he brings rather than order what you want; but

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no one thinks of grumbling, and living costs little either in money or trouble. And then for society—have we not the Presidents of no less than six Universities and Professors innumerable? and are not the Maine folk the real old original Yankees, with any amount of shrewd sense and stately, self-respecting manners? Keen at a bargain and saving in words, they are yet well worth the trouble it takes to know them, and when once they like you no one can be kinder or more full of friendly, neighbourly deeds.”

The winter of 1896–1897 was again passed at Alassio. It was the last of the winters spent abroad, the last indeed of any long journeys. Mrs. Hill's strength proved each year less equal to the strain, and Birkbeck Bill became more and more reluctant to leave his study and his books. Long absences not only made the continuance of any work difficult, but in the case of the task he now first seriously began, the editing of the *Lives of the Poets*, it became clearly impossible. In a letter to a correspondent on Boswellian matters, Mr. Keith Leask, which he wrote on December 15th, 1896, from Alassio, he describes his difficulties. He also mentions Vice-Chancellor Cotton, before whom he matriculated. He had described him at that date as looking “like a fiery old martyr” (see p. 26).

“MY DEAR SIR,—I am returning the last proof sheets of your *Boswell*. . . . You are certainly a sound Johnsonian—as thoroughly *Johnsonized* as Boswell could have wished, and moreover almost as sound a Boswellian. . . . Your anecdote about Routh and Cotton is amusing. Cotton was Vice-Chancellor when I matriculated. Even at that solemn moment

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I do not think I looked at him with awe. I laughed at him when I saw him perched a few weeks later— Look what I have done! written three pages to you on a sheet of paper on which I had begun a Christmas letter to one of my grandchildren. I cannot copy the last page, so you must make the best of it. His father was at Oxford in your time— E. M. Hill, Exhibitioner of Balliol. He was two years junior to my son-in-law, whom you mentioned in one of your letters—W. J. Ashley, who has been Professor in Economic History in Harvard for more than six years. My other son-in-law—C. G. Crump, editor of Landor's works—was also at Balliol. To return from this long digression. I saw Cotton perched up, like Parson Rook in Cock Robin, on a scaffold by the side of the Earl of Derby, the Chancellor, not as Juxon was with Charles I., but offering prayers for the New Museum whose foundation stone was being laid.

"I hope to edit Johnson's *Lives*. If all goes well, I shall set about it seriously on my return to England. If only I made more by this editing I could afford to bring out and take back most of the books I need; but I do not get so well paid as a carpenter. If I had not some private means, I could never edit Johnson and Boswell. It took fifty-nine days last year for a box of books to come by *petite vitesse*! from London to Allassio. To bring them with me I have to pay rather more than if I sent them by book post."

TO MRS. ASHLEY.

"ALASSIO, *January* 17, 1897.

"After tea we settle down to Italian till supper; Mother takes to her knitting when her head gets tired.

We sup at 7.30. At 8 we play our two games of cribbage, and then I read an act of some play of Shakespeare. We have finished a dozen plays or so. How glorious the old fellow is ! He stands apart—no one is second to him, no one is like him—among English authors, I mean. Of no one could you say if his genius had been extended he would have been equal to Shakespeare. How noble a teacher he is of life ! Dante often angers me with his horrible conception of a devilish God, and with his rejoicing at the sight of the most cruel torments. There are, of course, in the *Inferno* passages which show a most tender heart, and there are noble outbursts of anger at wrong-doing ; nevertheless, I cannot think that the book did good on the whole ; it must have made men more superstitious and more cruel at a time when superstition and cruelty were the great curse. We must not, of course, judge Dante by an age not his own ; but he seems to me to stand immeasurably below Homer and Shakespeare, both of whom looked on life as men full of the noblest kind of life, and not as men made gloomy by superstition and by the wickedness of the world in which their lot was cast. How sunk Italy was and is ! its great teacher did nothing to free it from the curse of gloomy superstition."

" ALASSIO, *January 30, 1897.*

" . . . I have nearly finished reading *Gil Blas* in Italian, a book that belonged to my poor mother. Her name is on the fly-leaf, with the date 1825. *Gil Blas* is one of those few books, like *Robinson Crusoe*, that we wish would never come to an end. I do not know how many times I have read it, always with great delight. I think that it is the most interesting story ever written, next to the *Odyssey*. I do not

suppose you or Will ever read it. Perhaps it is not altogether a woman's book, not but that it might with very few omissions be read aloud. Le Sage was as witty as Molière. The strange thing about the book is that there was a very long interval—thirty years or so—between the first two and the last two volumes. I wonder whether a skilful French critic can discover any difference between the two parts. To me it reads all of one piece."

"ALASSIO, *February* 13, 1897.

"Here is a strange story to tell you. A few days ago a hearse drove up to the eastern boundary of Alassio, bringing the dead body of a lady from Genoa on the way to the cemetery in Laigueglia, a little town a couple of miles to the west. At the Dazio (octroi house) the officer insisted on having the coffin opened to search for smuggled goods. A rabble soon gathered all round. I do not know whether any of the relations were present. Perhaps not. How easy it would have been to send a guard to watch the hearse through the town! It is to be hoped that there was not the same strictness in all the towns between here and Genoa, for they lie very thick."

"ALASSIO, *February* 21, 1897.

"We were full of shame and anger about Crete and Greece. That English ships of war should be stopping Greek vessels taking volunteers and arms! The ministers boast of the six months' agreement among the great Powers—a gang of ruffians. I have sent a couple of guineas to Maurice for him to send on to the fund raising for the Cretans. The *Daily News* hopes that in the end Crete will at all events be independent

of Turkey; but Balfour only the other day in the House spoke of the insurrection tending to defeat the hopes of Turkey reforming itself—as if that loathsome corpse has any power of breathing life into its own veins! I wish I were a millionaire to pour money and arms into Greece and Crete. In the *Daily News* there was a review of Nansen's book and ridiculous praise of a piece of rant. I shall not be able to read his narrative I feel sure—he, like so many men, has got corrupted by the vile novel-writers and the special correspondents, and has no simplicity of style. What simple writers most of the great discoverers were! I greatly fear the permanent effects on our language of the present fashion. When I read a grave work like Hodgkin's *Invaders of Italy* I saw that he had been tainted by it."

"ALASSIO, *March* 21, 1897.

"We went out to dinner two nights ago . . . and met a Colonial bishop—Smythe, Bishop of Lebombo, in the Zulu country 'or thereabouts.' He was an interesting man—a gentle, good look about him. He told me that he asked some of the Zulu 'boys' who had been working in the mines—gold or diamond—which made the best masters. They answered the Jews, for they kept to their agreement about wages and never got angry. Who came next the Bishop could not remember; the third were the English, who too often lost their temper and used violence; the worst were the Dutch. He said there is a great desire among many of the Europeans to introduce slavery under the name of forced labour.

"I was talking to Mr. Rathbone about Lord Salisbury. He says that Bismarck's account of him is exactly true—a lath painted to look like iron. He

believes he is really well disposed towards Greece, and is against Turkey, but he is very timid."

Birkbeck Hill's "or thereabouts" is a quotation from a story which he was fond of relating; how an old lady described her son as having emigrated "to the Sidney Isles or thereabouts."

TO MRS. ASHLEY.

"ALASSIO, *March* 27, 1897.

" — told me a story of Chamberlain when Head of the Board of Trade. He had drawn up a Shipping Act. — and — mended it much, and showed what they had done to Chamberlain, who being no lawyer, referred them to Herschel, the Attorney-General. Finally it was got into such shape that it would have been a really good Bill—acceptable to all honest shipowners, but one which would fall heavily on rogues. It was late in the session. — said to Chamberlain, 'If you will bring in the Bill without replying to the brutal attacks made on you by bad shipowners, and will not make a stir, the Bill can be got through; if you make a big speech, it will be lost.' Chamberlain replied, 'I am not like you, who can turn the other cheek when smitten on one. I shall attack those who have attacked me.' He made a brilliant speech, and the Bill has never been carried. — said to himself, 'That man will never be Prime Minister. He hates too well.'"

"ALASSIO, *April* 17, 1897.

"I am deep in Jowett's Life. . . . So far it raises much my estimate of the Master. How he could have

liked Stanley so much I cannot understand—he was, however, always faithful to his friendships. I must read Stanley's Life, and write an essay on him. That courtly, picturesque impostor deserves a sharp attack. He had never cleared his mind of cant, though he disguised it, I daresay even from himself, with pretty moss. What do you say to this passage in one of his letters? 'Had it appeared when it was intended to appear, the whole history of the last five years, perhaps of the next fifty years, would have been different!' What was this apparition which would have changed the history of those five years in which the Crimean War was brought to an end and the Indian Mutiny broke out and was crushed? The publication of a Review of Jowett's *Epistles of St. Paul* in the *Times*, which was printed but suppressed! Could folly have sunk to a lower depth even in a History of the Saints? And this fellow wrote history!"

"ALASSIO, April 25, 1897.

"I have finished the Life of the Master of Balliol, and am looking forward eagerly to the promised volume of his Letters. I found it the most interesting Life I have read for a long while. It has greatly raised my respect and liking for the old man. It is, I am aware, a one-sided account. That side of his character which was disliked by so many of the learned men of Oxford is scarcely touched on—not a word said of his proposition to Congregation that Max Müller should receive £300 a year for lecturing on the Rig Vedas. His religion, strong and permanent as it was, is of the vaguest. His God made me think of 'old Mr. Edward Cave's account of the ghost he saw,' or I should say of Johnson's report of it—'Why, sir, something of a

shadowy being.' His immortality seems to me no immortality at all, for it contains no recognition of friends. However, he is not consistent in these notions. I intend to read the book again on my return home, and gather together his thoughts on this great question. I have noted all the passages in which I see Johnsonian quotations and influences—only three or four in vol. i., but very numerous in vol. ii. Johnson had, I am sure, a great effect on his character."

Professor Jowett's love of Boswell and his opinion of Birkbeck Hill's work are both expressed in his Latin oration at the Commemoration of 1887, when he was Vice-Chancellor. He then said:—

"Ex prelo Academico prodeunt indies libri in omni genere omni materia præstantissimi, quorum vel brevissimam mentionem facere vix suppeteret tempus. Unum tantum librum a me non commemoratum nolim, qui, sæpius a primis annis lectus, nunc denuo perlectus, maximâ me jucunditate affecit, Vitam dico Sam. Johnson, a Jac. Boswell olim conscriptam, et a Georgio Birkbeck Hill nuper editam. Cui operi vir eruditissimus tantam temporum et hominum præteritorum memoriam, tantam diligentiam, tantam attulit ingenii perspicacitatem, ut nihil sit, quod vel ad intellectum rerum vel ad voluptatem lectionis desiderare possis."

TO MRS. ASHLEY.

"1 THE WILDERNESS, HAMPSTEAD,
"June 16, 1897.

"My old friend — lamented that the two new volumes (of my *Johnson Miscellanies*) are so dear as

to be above his reach. The net price is a guinea. On Sunday he had eight glasses of hollands and seltzer—a shilling each, a pint of stout, and some cider, besides half a dozen cigars or so. Two days' abstinence from cigars and liquor would have paid for my book."

CHAPTER XIII

The Queen's Jubilee—Women's Jubilee Dinner—Pope's character—Death of Gladstone—The South African War—Letter to a little boy—A "Grand total in pockets"—Relief of Ladysmith—Fitzgerald's Letters.

THE Jubilee of 1897 aroused in Birkbeck Hill the same sort of feeling that the sham fight and military music on Hampstead Heath had stirred. But apart from the excitement which the deep boom of the distant cannon aroused and the regret that he had made no effort to share in a great and moving pageant lay a deeper feeling—England was "the noblest empire the world had ever seen."

Even his sense of shame at the time of the Boer War could not change this conviction, though it did bring home to him the mischievous effect which the almost purely military character of the Queen's second Jubilee had on the temper of the nation.

The letter dated July 15th refers to the Dinner given at the Grafton Gallery, when a certain number of distinguished women invited each an equally distinguished man to be present as her guest. Dr. Hill was the guest of the late Miss Adeline Sergeant.

The *Rossetti Letters* of which he speaks were entrusted to him by his friend Mrs. Helen Allingham, and were written to her husband, Mr. William Allingham.

Dr. Hill made out of them a series of articles for the *Atlantic Monthly*, and published them later on as

a book. They formed the articles whose "vivaciousness" had so much charmed Mr. Scudder.

For the book he added a good deal of interesting matter.

TO MRS. ASHLEY.

"1 THE WILDERNESS, HAMPSTEAD,
"June 23, 1897.

" 'I am so vexed,' as old John the gardener at Bruce Castle used to say, 'that I could eat a turkey.' I am so vexed that I did not see the great sight of yesterday that I foolishly fret over it. On Monday I went through Cheapside and Fleet Street; it was the gayest of sights, like the fairy scene in a pantomime, set up in the streets. The crowd was great but orderly, and free from rudeness or roughness to an amazing degree. At the corner of the Bank of England, opposite the Mansion House, where it was dense, there was a baby sleeping in a perambulator. I am sure there is a very great change in London crowds since I was young—the schools have done great things. We English do know how to govern ourselves—all of us except Oxford and Cambridge undergraduates.

"Last night we saw the bonfire on the Heath—a fine pile. The crowd was vast. We could see the fires lighted up on the north-western heights, but in the distance they were rather interesting than conspicuous, carrying one's mind back to the old Armada days and the beacons. I bought Norman a flag—a Royal Standard—and it and the Union Jack were flown from his nursery window.

"Grievous as have been the failings of England in the last two years, it is the noblest empire by very far the world has ever seen—the Government that has

done more by far than any other to spread justice and equal dealing between man and man. We must not let the Jingoism mar its fair face.

"I am busy over my *Rossetti Letters*, copying many hours every day. I shall give the correspondence in full."

TO HIS WIFE.

"HAMPSTEAD, *July* 15, 1897.

"The Dinner last night went off very well. We were seated at tables of twelve, and the president of each table introduced every one to the others. I was on Mrs. Mary Davies' left, on her right was Sir. A Mackenzie; next to him was a lady with a very pleasant face, next her Sir John Gorst, and beyond him Sarah Grand, whoever she may be; on my left was Miss Sergeant. The rest of the people at my table were out of my latitude and sight almost. At first there was a great din—though the tables were narrow it was like talking across Fleet Street. I kept them pretty merry at my end, when a comparative calm came. The waiting was pretty rapid, but my helping of sole consisted altogether of some green vegetable. However, I got a little bird all to myself, on which I mainly dined. The after-dinner claret could not have made Lady Henry Somerset drunk.

"I met some pleasant people, among them Mr. Rose and Edward Hughes. I talked a little also to Holman Hunt, also to Sidney Lee, Shorter, and W. L. Courtney.

"It was an interesting and amusing sight, but I should be very sorry to have much of such scenes. To be, in any degree, however slight a lion is very bad for the character. When we come to reflect how it is

that each one was chosen as distinguished—I by a kindly elderly novelist whose novels I have never read and never shall read—it is absurd to find oneself pleased with the distinction.”

TO MRS. BURDON SANDERSON.

“THE COLLEGE, WYE, KENT,

“*December 27, 1897.*

“MY DEAR MRS. BURDON SANDERSON,—Just before starting from this pleasant spot I received by parcel post the most glorious rug—or shall I call it shawl—which I have ever possessed—I might say have ever seen. I did not know that in the nature of things such an article existed.

“There was nothing to show from whom it came, and at first we were altogether puzzled; but after consideration, and from our recollection of the handwriting, we have come to the conclusion that you are the kind donor. If, however, I am mistaken in this, my thanks will find an object in all the numerous acts of kindness which you have done my wife and myself ever since we have known you. Fortunately for me, this house, part of which dates from the fifteenth century, has very long and cold passages, though delightfully warm rooms. I have therefore every opportunity for displaying my new treasure. I wear it somewhat ostentatiously, just as Dr. Johnson wore his new Master of Arts gown at Oxford after his degree was conferred on him. I look forward to displaying it on the promenade at Dover when a cold north-easter is blowing. I have thought of the African king whom Goldsmith tells of; he described himself as Lord of the whole Earth and mighty monarch of the brass-hilted

sword. I shall on my next title-page describe myself as Honorary Fellow of Pembroke College, Oxford, and proud possessor of the glorious shawl. We have been very happy here, having found the kindest of hosts. Lucy and Charlie and little Norman are with us.—Yours affectionately,

“G. BIRKBECK HILL.”

TO MRS. ASHLEY.

“DOVER, *February* 25, 1898.

“I am now working at vol. viii. of Elwin and Courthorpe's *Pope*. Elwin knew a great deal. He fails, however—greatly fails—in not giving references. He made what I look upon as a great mistake in not arranging the letters in order of time throughout. He puts them together in sets, according to the persons to whom they were written. Pope was a mean, lying, shuffling rascal—a great genius, too. I shall be glad to be rid of him, but there is a great deal yet to do first.”

“HOLLY HILL, HAMPSTEAD,

“*May* 21, 1898.

“The death of Gladstone affected me a good deal. We were glad for him to be released, but the world seems poorer without him. To Adam Smith, Peel, Cobden, Bright, and Gladstone every poor man at every meal he eats is deeply indebted. The poor are most indebted, because these five men have changed scarcity into plenty for them; but we are all scarcely less indebted, not only for the comfort they have given us, but for the stability they have given to the country by spreading content founded on justice. Mr. Glad-

stone upheld and raised as far as he could the standard of right. In him there was nothing base, nothing selfish. Disraeli, and Chamberlain, who follows in his scoundrelly footsteps, have done England the greatest wrong that can be done to a country—they have lowered the standard of right—they have dragged it down to the mud. It is touching to see the feeling displayed in so many countries—how much is Mr. Gladstone honoured in Italy, Montenegro, Greece, and the Balkan countries. I was pleased to see that Balfour was much affected in speaking about his loss. It is a noble side of political life that an opponent can only with difficulty suppress his emotion when speaking in Parliament about one who only a few years ago was separated from him in strife by only the breadth of a table."

"WIMBLEDON, *October 20, 1899.*

"Maurice knows many of the Liberal Party among the Boers. They told him that they were making good and steady progress till the Jameson Raid threw everything back, and confirmed Kruger and the Dutch Tories in their power. The Liberals, however, were lifting up their heads, and again growing in power. when Chamberlain and Rhodes have dashed the slowly rising fabric to the ground—never to rise again. If only there had been honesty and patience—the easier to practise as Kruger is an old man—another ten years might easily have seen a peaceful revolution. It is a dreadful thought that we open our newspapers every morning hoping to see that hundreds—thousands even—of these 'embattled farmers' have been slain. Nevertheless, our defeat

would be worse than their victory—and so we must hope for their slaughter. What grief there is already in many a homestead, and what bitterness and hatred which will pass down from generation to generation !”

In the following letter to Mrs. Ashley, Birkbeck Hill shows that he was aware that neither she nor Professor Ashley agreed with his political opinions. He had always been in the habit of pouring out his thoughts on politics, as on all other matters, in his letters to her, but that should not be taken as any proof that he believed her always to be in agreement with him. Free discussion and expression of opinion had been the family habit since his children were in their teens, and the habit was kept up in his letters as in his talk.

“LYME REGIS,

“*December 1, 1899.*

“As for what you say of the Boers’ treatment of the natives, you must remember that the Cape Town and London Press has been largely corrupted by that scoundrelly Johannesburg gang. Pig-headed and unjust as the Boers have been, their character has been and is grossly blackened. The infamous — inserted the other day a pretended letter from a soldier—forged no doubt in Cape Town or Fleet Street—saying that the Boers mutilate the dead bodies. Our treatment of the natives has been bad in Rhodesia (that that scoundrel should give his name to a country!), very bad. I met the Bishop of Zululand, or some part of it, at Allassio, who told me of great acts of oppression by white men in general. In

Zanzibar or the adjacent coast we have been giving up runaway slaves to their masters—till the Attorney-General, being appealed to, was obliged to own that it was against the common law of England. Grieved as I am about the war, nevertheless I am most anxious for news of victory. We shall go on till we have conquered them, so that the sooner a complete victory comes the better. Then the real difficulty will begin—to govern a sullen majority. Representative government will be impossible in the Transvaal and Orange Free State, and very difficult out of them.”

TO MRS. CRUMP.

“ 1 LIBRARY COTTAGE,
 “ LYME REGIS,
 “ *November 26, 1899.*

“ This is a morning for being cheerful, as the sun is pouring in and the sea looks beautiful. A south-west breeze, a gentle one, has risen and cleared away clouds. What a difference sunshine does make! In what part of the house at home do you think I most often picture myself? On the landing, with my hand on the handle of the study door, just going to turn it and see how pleasant and friendly and homelike the room looks. It always welcomes me whenever I come back tired from a walk. I like my little bedroom, too, though it will be scarcely big enough for dying in. However, with such bright sunshine streaming in, I should not be turning my thoughts homewards.”

The following letters are two of very many written by Birkbeck Hill to children. The greater number

of these letters were collected soon after his death, and published in a small volume, entitled *Letters written by a Grandfather*. The first letter, to his little three-year-old grandson, was suggested by a quaint fancy of the child's own. It has been included here because no collection of Birkbeck Hill's letters would furnish a faithful picture of his mind that entirely ignored the many delicate and wayward fancies which he wove into letters to children. The second letter gives a comical but perfectly accurate description of the mass of clothing with which he endeavoured to cure his habitual chilliness.

TO NORMAN CRUMP.

“LYME REGIS,

“December 2, 1899.

“‘What is it on the other side of Mother's bed? Is it a traction engine?’ ‘No, Grandfather, it is not a traction engine.’ ‘Is it a steam roller?’ ‘No, it is not a steam roller.’ ‘Is it a puffie engine?’ ‘No, it is not a puffie engine. It does not go whizzy-whizzy. It is a dear little baby sister, name of Helen Josephine.’ ‘Did Norman find it in a wood?’ ‘Norman went for a walk to a far-away wood, where elephants lived—kind elephants, not angry rogue elephants. Norman went walking and walking along till a dear little elephant came running up to him and said, “What do you want in the elephants' wood, little boy?” So Norman said, “Dear little elephant, I want a baby sister; can you give me one?” So the kind little elephant said to Norman, “Little boy, climb on to my back.” So the elephant stooped down by the side of a bank so that Norman could step

on to his back and sit down on it. Then up got the little elephant, saying to Norman, "Little boy, hold on tight by my big ears." So Norman caught hold of his big ears, and then the elephant went trotting and trotting away with Norman on his back. At last they came to a beautiful hollow in the wood, where there was a little pool. All round the little pool was soft grass, and moss, and all kinds of flowers—more flowers than ever you saw before. There the elephant stooped down and said, "Little boy, what do you see?" So Norman looked, and first he only saw the beautiful hollow in the wood, and the little pool, and the soft grass, and the moss and the flowers—more than ever he had seen before. At last he saw a little nest in the moss almost hidden by the flowers. In the nest was lying a little baby sister fast asleep. On a branch just above it Robin Redbreast was singing to it a quiet tune, while Jenny Wren hopped about in the twigs, peeping first on one side and then on the other side at the dear little baby sister. Then the kind elephant stretched out his trunk and very gently lifted up the baby sister, and laid her in Norman's arms. So Norman held her very fast. Then the kind elephant turned round, and went trotting and trotting away till he came to the bank at the end of the elephants' wood. Then he said to Norman, "Get down, dear little boy, and carry baby sister all the way home, and give her to your mother for her own dear little baby girl." So Norman got down, holding little baby sister very carefully, and he went on and on, till at last he came all that long way to far-away Hampstead. Then he went to Holly Hill, and then to No. 1 The Wilderness, and he went up the steps and in at the hall door and up the stairs, till he came to dear Mother's room. Then he said, "I've brought you a dear little baby sister. Will you take care

of her for me?" Then Mother said, "That I will; and I will call her Helen Josephine."'"

TO LETTICE CRUMP.

"HAMPSTEAD, *May 3, 1900.*

"I ought to have answered your pretty letter long ago; and I should have done so had I not had so many pockets. You must never have so many pockets, or, when you become an old lady, you will forget to answer letters, for you will put them in one of all these many pockets and then you will forget them. How many pockets do you think I have in cold weather, when I wear a cardigan and have on my great-coat? You must add them up, and here is a sum for you to do:—

CLOTHES.	POCKETS.
Coat	5
Waistcoat	3
Trousers	2
Cardigan	2
Great-coat	5

Grand Total,

"Sometimes on a very cold day, when travelling, I have to put on two great-coats, and then there are five more. Now in each of these pockets you may put a letter, and then you may forget all about it. So, as I said, never have all these pockets in your frocks. Why, some day, when you are a young woman, there might come to you a letter from the Prince of Cloudland, asking you to marry him, and to live in his fine palace, all dazzling white and blue and golden and red and saffron, with a great rainbow border running all round it. Then you might put it in one of your seventeen

pockets and forget all about it for many days, till one day, as you were looking for your thimble, which a dog would swallow thinking it was a bone, you would come upon the letter. 'Bless my soul, you would say, 'I have forgotten to answer the Prince of Cloudland's letter. I will write at once and tell him that I will marry him, for I should like to live in his fine palace.' So you would write to him in your best hand on a sheet of gilt-edged paper, telling him that you would be his wife. But he would reply that he was very sorry that you were too late, for thinking that you scorned him, he had married that very morning the adorable Jemima Keziah Keren-happuch Job, and that they were that very moment eating up their wedding cake as fast as they could ; in fact, there was so little left that they could not spare you a slice."

TO MRS. CRUMP.

"LYME REGIS,

"*December 3, 1899.*

"I like the name of Helen, and do not dislike Josephine as a second name, so that you have done well in Baby's names. How much I wish I could see Norman come peeping round ! How fond he will be of his little sister, and what a good elder brother he will be to her ! I wish I might see him some day at Balliol showing her and us all his rooms, while another Charlie or Maurice—Norman's best friend—were there 'with soft delicate desires all prompting him how fair young Helen is.'

"There is an old fool running away with time—but why not 'go courting with my boys,' now that all courting on my own account is long done with ?

‘E’en in our ashes live our wonted fires.’ How I am quoting! What will Charlie say if you show him this letter? He will shake his wise head and say, ‘The Doctor is falling into his dotage.’”

TO MRS. ASHLEY.

“LYME REGIS,

“December 29, 1899.

“There has been such a brutal spirit widely spread in the country that deep humiliation is the only cure possible. I am cheered to think in the midst of all our reverses, and much as I hope for victory, that this war gives good hopes for freemen against soldiers. The Swiss most certainly will be greatly encouraged, though with their railways and excellent roads their country will not be so easily defended as the Transvaal.”

“HAMPSTEAD, *March 1, 1900.*

“At eleven o’clock this morning, when I was writing notes on the Life of Milton in Johnson’s *Lives of the Poets*, the boys in the school across the way began to cheer. A minute or two later, Lucy came into my room with the news that Ladysmith was relieved. I was going to the Temple to lunch with Maurice, and though, when I started, the news had reached Hampstead but a short time, flags were already flying, and more were being got out. On the Fire Station notice board was displayed in large letters ‘Ladysmith relieved.’ I went by Primrose Hill and Regent’s Park to Oxford Street, and along it to Chancery Lane, and so to the Temple.

“People looked cheerful, and walked with a brisker step. Many of the omnibuses and some of the cabs

carried Union Jacks; . . . there was a holiday look everywhere. There was eager talk, too. A church off Fleet Street was ringing its bells most merrily—the bells from time to time ‘firing.’ . . . I had intended to walk to Liverpool Street, but a threat of a snow-storm drove me into an omnibus at the western end of Cheapside. The conductor said that that morning the omnibus had been blocked for three-quarters of an hour near the Mansion House by the huge crowd that gathered when the news was displayed. Before long we were stopped; at last the driver turned into a side street, seeing that the crowd was just as thick. I could see through the front window that the whole of the street between the Mansion House, Exchange, and Bank was full of people—not a single carriage, I think, being there. Through this side street we made such slow progress that most of the passengers—I among them—got out and walked. I did not hear a single grumble. In the train at Broad Street some schoolboys had taken possession of a couple of carriages, hanging out flags and cheering at every station. The ticket man said to me, ‘The people are going mad.’ The policeman standing just outside the wicket said in reply, ‘They have gone mad.’

“In my carriage were two passengers—strangers—who at once began to talk about the great news. One of them said that he had seen before the Mansion House a man swarm up one of the electric lamps and fasten a Union Jack on the top. A hat was handed round for him, and in a few minutes thirteen shillings were collected. They (the passengers) both agreed that Cronje, and Kruger when he is caught, will be kept prisoners for life.”

"HAMPSTEAD, *March 30, 1900.*

"I have almost finished the second volume of Fitzgerald's Letters. When you next see Professor Norton will you tell him that I am thankful to him for being the provocative cause of so many excellent letters? I wish his and those of many other correspondents had been included. I do not know that these Letters would please you and Will as much as they do me; for they do not deal with social questions. It is their literary quality that is so delightful. He is admirable as a critic.

"I have finished my notes on the Life of Savage. . . . I have begun Swift—a much harder piece of work, much as I know of his life and writings. There is so much material to draw on, and so many statements of Johnson to correct, criticise, or confirm. If only I had the strength of even a few years back, how much I could write! What a pity that my life and training as a scholar did not begin till after I broke down in health! Had I received the education that I deserved I might at fifty have known all that I know now—limited as that is, but yet over one part of our literature full and accurate. However, I am not too old to learn—though I am too old to make the best use of my learning."

"HAMPSTEAD, *July 6, 1900.*

"When I have not Milton to work at, I turn to Dryden, for at these two Lives I am labouring alternately. What a many curious facts I come across! If I live to finish my task, I hope that my edition of the *Lives of the Poets* will be surpassed by very few editions of our great authors—but there is a deal to do

still. It is happy that I have this occupation in these unhappy and dreadful times, so that I can keep my mind from dwelling on them. There has not been such a gloom since the Indian Mutiny, but it is too sad to write about."

CHAPTER XIV

A country cottage—Edition of *Gibbon's Autobiography*—The Jubilee and Jingoism—"Can it be Lord Tennyson?"—Correspondence with Lord Ronald Sutherland Gower—Mr. Spencer Scott—Letter to a fellow-Johnsonian—*Lives of the Poets*—His grandson Norman—Death of his wife—"Fifty years since"—The end of a scholar's life—Bequest to Oxford.

IN the summer of 1900 Birkbeck Hill had reluctantly to decide that the joint home at The Wilderness was not quiet enough for his wife's always failing health. A small house, with a pleasant lawn and a fruitful little garden, was therefore taken for her at Aspley Guise, in Bedfordshire, and thither she moved in July. Husband and children visited her constantly, but the house was not suitable for literary work, and there were, moreover, times when the perfect quiet of a solitary life were needed for Mrs. Hill's health. For little more than two years she lived there, and was at rest—such rest as her life had rarely brought, and had never before taught her to find. To Birkbeck Hill also it was a place of happiness, where air was pure, where long forest glades invited rambles, where the garden cried aloud for care, and where books could be read that neither needed nor furnished notes.

TO MRS ASHLEY.

"ASPLEY GUISE, *September 7, 1900.*

" . . . I have not seen Mother so happy and placid for years and years. I was much touched by her saying

a few evenings ago that she sometimes felt that she had not deserved such a happy retreat—as if anyone deserved it more. We have made a great change in our garden. I have hunted up all ‘the orphans,’ as I used to call the flowers hidden under trees and bushes, and have transported nearly eighty wallflowers, besides Canterbury bells, stocks, pinks, flags, and a great many bulbs. Next May and June there should be a gay appearance. We have bought a mowing machine, and Mother works with it a good deal. . . . I read here nothing but Scott and Madame de Sevigné. After reading *Old Mortality*, I turned to the novels of which I knew least—the *Monastery*, *Abbot*, *Kenilworth*, and *Woodstock*. It is curious that of *Woodstock*, which I have not read since I was a boy, I had clear recollection of only two passages—one where Colonel Pearson—the only name I remembered of the fictitious characters—suggested to Cromwell the use of torture to extort a confession, as he had done in the West Indies, and the other where a Puritan quoted a passage from Milton to show that there was a Puritan poet not unworthy of Shakespeare. The feeling of the horror I had of torture imprinted on my mind the first passage, and the man’s name [the name of a cousin] added to my indignation that such a suggestion should have been made to Cromwell; while, I suppose, a love of literature must have imprinted the second. I doubt whether I ever read more than the beginning of the *Monastery*. I think the white Lady of Avenel must have made me lay it down, and that I did not go on to the *Abbot*, for it seemed to me altogether a new story. Many of Scott’s novels I have read again and again, but now I shall read those that I have neglected.”

Birkbeck Hill’s editing of the *Lives of the Poets* had been more than once interrupted by other work.

In 1899 he had brought out a volume of hitherto unpublished letters of Dean Swift; in 1900 he completed an edition of *Gibbon's Autobiography*. Whilst engaged on this latter book he had more than once to apply to the President of Magdalen for information on points connected with Gibbon's Oxford career. After the publication of this book, he wrote to the President :—

" HAMPSTEAD, *December* 30, 1900.

"It is a great pleasure to me to know that you find so much to interest you in my *Gibbon*, and that it has been useful both to yourself and to some of your friends. I have heard very little about it from the outside world, for my publisher does not send me the reviews, as my other publishers have done. Perhaps there have not been many notices.

"I trust that it is felt in Magdalen, and in Oxford, that I have said all that there is to be said in defence of both the College and the University, by showing where Gibbon exaggerated, and also by instancing men who gave a very different account.

"Bad as the state of things undoubtedly was, he heightened the colour. General Read's book should be read with interest by Magdalen men, for I trust that Gibbon, in spite of his abuse, is still regarded as a Magdalen man. What a noble retaliation it would be to name the buildings in which he lodged by his name, for 'New' no longer fitly describes them!"

TO MRS. ASHLEY.

" HAMPSTEAD, *January* 26, 1901.

". . . The Queen is dead and there is a new King, and the old order changeth, and what the new will be

we do not know. After deducting all the exaggeration of the newspapers, it is clear that the Queen's death has made a deep impression far and wide on the face of the earth. I think, in spite of all her virtues, it was unfortunate that she lived to her second Jubilee, for that event gave a great impulse to swagger and Jingoism and war. It was a military ceremony; the Speaker was not in it, nor the Chief Justice. Her wish to have a military funeral is not a good sign."

"HAMPSTEAD, *February 9, 1901.*

"Lucy was travelling from Braintree on Wednesday with an old cattle dealer, who with a certain solemnity in his voice asked her whether she had been to see the Queen's funeral. Hearing she had not, he dropped the solemnity and exclaimed, 'There has been enough said about the Queen's death; there has been too much said, and now it is time to talk of business.' He goes every Monday from Essex to Chippenham in Wiltshire to buy calves for stock, and sometimes gets as many as two hundred at a time. These he sends by cattle train to his own station. Lucy asked whether he gave them food and water on the journey. He replied that he gave them three trusses of straw to each truck—about forty-five calves to a truck—but nothing more, as they left in the afternoon and arrived early next morning. 'They are not like Christians, as you may say, who want a drop here and a drop there all along the line.' . . . Mrs. Rhodes asks my opinion of the war. Tell her that I look upon it as the greatest blunder—I do not say crime—committed by England since the revolt of our American Colonies. My grandchildren and great-grandchildren will think of Chamberlain as we do of George III. and Lord North.

I have no doubt that in the end it will lead to another war—unless our descendants are wiser—and to the separation of South Africa as a Dutch confederation of Republics from England. The Dutch element is the permanent one—they are the farmers; the English are the trading classes and the mineral diggers. When the gold and diamond mines are exhausted they will go, while the Dutch will have become a strong nation."

This is the last letter to Mrs. Ashley here printed. In the autumn of this year Professor Ashley was elected to fill the Chair of Commerce in the University of Birmingham, and frequent intercourse broke the habit of the weekly letters begun in the year 1888.

TO MRS. CRUMP.

"July 22, 1901.

"... I had an amusing greeting in the train two days ago. I was only just in time, and had to jump into the first carriage, where there was a tipsy fellow in the corner. He fixed his eyes on me, then pointed and said, 'Why, it's Tennyson?' He turned to his companion and asked him whether it was not Tennyson. The man replied, 'I had not noticed it, but you are not far from right.' Then the drunken man enlarged on the difficulty of writing poems, but I could not catch what he said. Then they talked of tobaccos, and the other said, 'I wonder what Lord Tennyson smokes.' Next the tipsy man fixed his eye on me and said, 'Excuse me, but I never saw such a likeness to Tennyson.' I answered that I had one great advantage over the poet, that he was dead and I was alive. At

Wimbledon I told him that he must part company with his lordship, and I left him in great good-humour."

Perhaps there never was a student who more completely buried himself in the past than did Birkbeck Hill—in all matters social and literary that is, for in politics he was ever in the present, the fiercest of Radicals. His remoteness in other matters is well shown in the following correspondence with Lord Ronald Sutherland Gower, and it is all the more remarkable because they had already corresponded together some fourteen years previously. There was, however, a twinkle in Birkbeck Hill's eyes when he wrote these letters—though in all good faith he had found himself obliged to address his reply to a kind letter written by Lord Ronald Sutherland Gower, by cutting off the signature and pasting it on to an envelope.

His correspondent replied, appending a signature in bold capital letters; but still the student, with his thoughts all in the eighteenth century, knew little of either modern books and their writers, and still less of modern Art. Without asking for enlightenment, he again replied, this time to "Dear Mr. Gower." But the correspondence needs both sides to enter into the humour of both writers, and so it opens with Lord Ronald's second letter.

It is to be presumed that the postscript in Dr. Hill's last letter existed only in the rough copy from which these letters are printed. The letters actually sent have not survived.

TO DR. BIRKBECK HILL.

“HAMMERFIELD, *August* 19, 1901.

“Never, dear Dr. Birkbeck Hill, has my bad writing been brought home to me with such *crushing* effect as by your and your friend's inability to read my signature. Many thanks for your kind and interesting letter. — Yours very truly and obliged

“RONALD
“SUTHERLAND
“GOWER.”

TO LORD RONALD SUTHERLAND GOWER.

“DEAR MR. GOWER,—Your kind letter raises in me fresh anxiety. A doubt rises in my mind that I should in addressing my letter give you a title. I have consulted one of the two Peerages I possess in vain—the other is concerned only with extinct creations. My modern one was published in 1864, serving my purpose fully, for all the nobles I have to do with belong to the seventeenth and eighteenth century. You may be so fortunate as to possess not only a portrait of Johnson by Reynolds, but what is perhaps even a greater treasure—youth, and so were not known to Burke in 1864.

“My son-in-law showed the value of a somewhat long training in the Record Office, for he read your first signature *Power*. I inclined to *Graves*, and nearly brought him over to my opinion. My daughter, whose experience is confined to sixteenth-century French, was wild enough to suggest *Jones*,

TO DR. BIRKBECK HILL.

"Many thanks, dear Dr. Birkbeck Hill, for your letter.

TO LORD RONALD SUTHERLAND GOWER.

“Had I possessed a copy of *Who's Who* I should certainly have avoided the shocking blunder into which I fell. But *Who's Who* costs money, I suppose at least half a crown; and think how far half a crown goes at a second-hand bookstall in Farringdon Street. Why I gave no more this summer for Prior's Poems, in folio, described by Sir Walter Scott as ‘this splendid edition of an English classic of the first order.’ If you can tell me of a *Who's Who* for the eighteenth century, I will buy it; but what have I to do with the twentieth except to die in it? . . . I should have known all about you if only you had had the luck to be born a hundred years ago. I am looking forward with no little apprehension to your next volume of *Reminiscences*. If you do record my lamentable blunder,

you will, I trust, be just enough to give a facsimile of the signature which led me into it.

"I am interested in the Life of Reynolds that you have in hand. Have you ever examined the splendid volumes of the late Alfred Morrison's Autographs? They are certain to contain an abstract of many of Sir Joshua's letters, and probably long quotations from them, if not entire letters. To the original letters Mr. Morrison gave me free access. When you come to Wilkes' Life you may like to see an autograph letter that I have addressed to Miss

"Believe me, dear Lord Ronald Sutherland Gower, etc.

"(There's a satisfaction in getting it right at last)."

Birkbeck Hill's handwriting could certainly be "as illegible as his betters," and the name of the lady to whom Wilkes wrote is quite undecipherable.

In the following letter to Mr. George Whale, Birkbeck Hill underrated the work yet to be done before the great task which he had set himself ten years previously would be finished. The last note was written, but the heavy work of revising, of verifying, of completing, and above all of Index making, never fell to his lot to do. Happy for his unfinished work that his nephew, Mr. Spencer Scott, was able to complete the heavy labour in the same spirit and with the same high sense of scholarship as he himself had shown in all his literary work.

"1 THE WILDERNESS, HAMPSTEAD,

"October 18, 1901.

"DEAR MR. WHALE,—You have taken so kind an interest in my edition of the *Lives of the Poets* that I

write to tell you that this evening I wrote my last note on the Life of Lyttelton—the last of the Lives, as you will remember.

“I have still some months to do in revision, verification, and further researches at the Museum; but the book is in such a state that it might go to the printer. If all goes well early next year, it should have received the final touches.

“It will take, I suppose, another year to go through the press and to make the Index—this last an oppressive task, which is already casting its shadow upon me.”

TO HIS SON NORMAN.

“HAMPSTEAD, *January 4, 1902.*

“I am reading—alas! only a few pages left—the new volume of Edward Fitzgerald’s Letters. I have now four volumes, and I fear no more are to come. However, they bear reading twice—and after a few years, if I live so long, they will do a third time. There are few letter-writers who give me so much pleasure—partly, perhaps, as I find that in literary judgments I almost always am of his way of thinking.

“I am revising and cutting down my notes on the *Lives of the Poets*. There is still a good deal to do—but ‘patience and spit on your hands, and you will catch the mosquito,’ as an American lady said to me—a stranger—when she saw me at Clarens descending with difficulty a frozen path.”

“ASPLEY GUISE, *March 8, 1902.*

“Dearest little Norman is very happy and well—a great pleasure to us both. What a sweet, pretty

voice he has, and what a beautiful smile ! The second afternoon after we arrived I was very drowsy, and was trying to sleep in the dining-room, while he was cutting out pictures. He woke me with a cough. As I opened my eyes he looked anxiously at me and said, 'I did not mean to !' and then he smiled. There came into my mind at once the verse, 'They saw his face as if it had been the face of an angel.' "

Throughout the summer of 1902 his absences from Aspley Guise became fewer and shorter each month ; in the early autumn he came, not again to leave his wife till she lay at last at rest. For months she lay slowly and most sadly fading out of life ; at the end of October she died. "These last two months do not dwell in my memory much," he wrote ; "they seem a kind of dream. My thoughts mostly go back nearly fifty years." But throughout these months he had nursed and soothed her with the love of long years. To their friend, Lady Burdon Sanderson, recalling the far-away day when he first met his wife, a shy girl, at Bruce Castle, he wrote:—

" . . . It is fifty years ago since I first saw my dear wife. It was on the Saturday before Easter Sunday, in 1852. I never forget the day, nor the very place where she was standing. My daughter found a little diary which she kept on her first visit to my father's house, when we were engaged. I was but nineteen years old, and she seventeen. On November 21st, 1854, she recorded, 'Up early. Finished packing. Talk with B. Set off for home after a most happy visit, a bright spot in my life.' I never saw this diary before."

For a few weeks he came home to us at Hampstead ;

for a few weeks he lived with us, dwelling mainly on his past, nor caring much whether, for himself, there were a future or not. For the little grandchildren who beat on his study door and were never refused, he still looked forward ; for his sons and daughters he still hoped with confidence. For himself there seemed a pause. Was not the last note written and his work done ?

At Christmas came sudden illness. For two months we nursed him—in his study, among his books. “They should have gone to Pembroke College, but they are too shabby,” he said. “I bought them old for the most part, and I have used them well. They are too well worn for a College.”

Among his books he died. In February we laid him to rest by his wife—under the pure sky he loved, at Aspley Guise, in the still churchyard, grass-grown and quiet, and the robins sang as they had sung when we, he then in our midst, had gathered there in the falling of the year.

His wish that his books should find a home in his old college was carried out. Those volumes which he had most used in his eighteenth century work were, after his death, rebound or mended as need was, and they now stand in a bookcase by themselves in the College Library. In the Common Room hangs his portrait, and facing it the row of Johnsonian prints and the Johnson autograph which had for so many years hung in his study at Burghfield, at Oxford, at The Wilderness. In the Oxford to which he owed his first knowledge of the depth and breadth of learning, in the Oxford which taught him to be a student and a Scholar, they hang as a memorial of the love he bore her, and of that elder son of Pembroke College to whom he devoted the best work of his life.

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